In(di)visible Tensions: Resistance in the Novels of Alejo Carpentier and Ralph Ellison

by

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Abstract

The history of Cuba and U.S. relations bounds Alejo Carpentier and Ralph Ellison in such a way that when they are put into conversation with each other it reframes the oft discussed themes of their oeuvre in terms of Resistance. The project seeks to posit the concept of in(di)visibility as the struggle that exists between conceptual frameworks that often results in their collapse and conflation. Understanding in(di)visibilities exposes the nuance between synonymous or dependent concepts and exposes their own ideological limitations. Therefore, when looking at their literary production through this particular framework one begins to discern how the acts of resistance the novel's characters engage in are made possible by virtue of the tension inherent to their own ideological positions. Beginning with a discussion of the ways in which Ellison's *Invisible Man* and Carpentier's *Los pasos perdidos* and *El acoso* present a nuance between Invisibility and Anonymity that uncovers why some characters are successful in their acts of dissent while others fail. Subsequent chapters continue the analysis of Invisible Man and incorporate readings of *El reino de este mundo* and *Écue-Yamba-Ó* to explore how the thematic of

Industry and Labor in order to understand further how the works in question present a mechanics of resistance that sets in motion the position of revolt in the novels. The final chapter looks at Carpentier's final novel *La consagración de le primavera* and Ellison's posthumous work *Three Days Before the Shooting…* in order to show how the in(di)visible is also at work in dependent concepts. A critique of the conditions of "exile" and "return" as presented in these two works reinforces the need for discerning the in(di)visibilities of our own ideological positions. This comparative approach not only adds to the ongoing scholarship of Carpentier and Ellison, it seeks to make these writers relevant in a modern day context by addressing how the polemics of human difference these works engage with still remain unresolved.

Primary Reader: Eduardo González

Secondary Reader: William Egginton

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Conocer diversas literaturas es
el medio mejor de libertarse de
la tiranía de algunas de ellas…

To know diverse literatures
is the best means of freeing oneself
from the tyranny of any of them…

-José Martí

In this dissertation, I bring together the novels of Cuban author Alejo Carpentier and African American writer Ralph Ellison in order to deploy a comparative mode of reading that challenges the power dynamics of influence and binary structures. Carpentier and Ellison were contemporaries and shared similar career trajectories; the 1950s saw the publication of their most enduring works *Los Pasos Perdidos* (1953) and *Invisible Man* (1952), respectively, and Carpentier published several more novels in his lifetime when compared to Ellison, both were similarly prolific in their writing of essays and explorations of music. There was also strong collaboration and connection between Cuban authors and

the artists of the Harlem Renaissance, most notably the correspondence and relationship between Nicolás Guillén and Langston Hughes. This is all to say that the worlds of Carpentier and Ellison were in each other's orbit, despite the fact that nothing in the research for this project suggests that the authors met or engaged with the other's work in any material or direct way. The absence of contact between the authors leads to the question of what there is to gain by establishing such a comparison and moreover, what is the basis for this juxtaposition?

The answers begin with understanding the role of Carpentier and Ellison as outsiders in a world that happened to be very inclusive of them. Carpentier was not born, nor did he die, in the country that he claimed as his own and his Spanish, although very Cuban in its delivery, was saturated with a French accent. It was not until after the Cuban Revolution that Carpentier saw his possibility of Cuba realized at a time when many other writers no longer saw it as such. For Ellison, his early success launched him into the echelons of high society. While other African American writers struggled with establishing the identity of the African American in all his facets, Ellison became interested in white consciousness as a means of bringing about an acceptance of any and all possible forms of blackness. His eventual break with Richard Wright and ongoing role as a public figure led many to view him as a panderer regardless of the literary significance of *Invisible Man*. Carpentier and Ellison led parallel lives in some respects but when viewed from a certain

perspective, even parallel lines appear to intersect at a vanishing point. What is ultimately at stake is whether or not a space exists where literature can engage with itself and with us instead of through us, and where Carpentier and Ellison can speak to each other in such away that gives their work modern-day relevance. This dissertation advocates for the creation of such a space.

At the core of the literary analysis in this project is the theory of what I have come to call the in(di)visible, which I posit as the position from which we both extricate synonymous concepts and reconcile those that appear antonymous. In essence, the in(di)visible is a tool for comparison. Comparison in the literary sense, however, goes beyond notions of sameness, difference, and influence as we have come to know them and instead, focuses on the ways in which texts inform and become relevant to one another as a byproduct of literary consumption. While this idea is influenced by the conceptualizations of the vanishing mediator by Fredric Jameson and Slavoj Zizek insofar as it mediates a dialectical relationship, the in(di)visible never vanishes; it is always present and waiting for the moment of recognition to be called upon and organize the literary relationship at hand. This methodology goes beyond traditional formulations of inter-textuality in that the textual relationship is not a linear one consumed with tracing genealogies or influence but rather, grants the texts the agency to explore the possibilities of such an interaction. Understanding in(di)visibilities exposes the nuance between

synonymous or antonymous concepts and exposes their own ideological limitations. Therefore, when looking at literary production through this framework, one begins to discern how the acts of resistance deployed by the novel's characters are made possible by virtue of the tension inherent to their own ideological positions.

The first chapter, titled "Discerning the In(di)visible: Invisibility and Anonymity in *Invisible Man*, *El Acoso*, and *Los Pasos Perdidos,*" examines how the notions—invisible and anonymous—that might interchangeably describe that which is unseen, actually establish different positions of resistance to oppression. Discussing the ways in which Ellison's *Invisible Man* and Carpentier's *Los pasos perdidos* and *El acoso* present a nuance between Invisibility and Anonymity uncovers why some characters are successful in their acts of dissent while others fail. The analysis begins by establishing Édouard Glissant's notion of opacity, developed in *Poetics of Relation* (1990), as a precursor to what I call the in(di)visible. For Glissant, our own culture systems ground our experiences and interpretations of our immediate worlds. As occurs in the colonial context when a dominant culture comes into contact with a minor culture, however, we become aware that our worldviews are not as transparent as we initially thought. The desire to return to the order perceived transparency gives establishes the ultimatum that the minor culture must assimilate and subvert to the dominant culture or otherwise cease to exist. The in(di)visible, then, allows for negotiating the discomfort of

realizing one's own state of opacity by discerning a framework that grounds the experience of contact with an other, a means for decolonizing the mind.

Both Carpentier and Ellison dive into the blur of the opacity when their fiction takes on the perspective of an unnamed narrator. The three novels that anchor the analysis of the first chapter all share a narrator whose name and identity remain unknown to the reader for various reasons. In *Invisible Man*, for example, the narrator simply calls himself an "invisible man" and will not reveal his birth name to the reader. In the Carpentier novels, the withholding of the narrators' names is folded into the larger narrative theme of the protagonists wanting to withdraw from their current lives, whether it is from a rejection of the condition of the modern man as in *Los pasos perdidos*, or the presence imminent danger in *El acoso*. By positing Ellison's narrator on the side of invisibility and both of Carpentier's on the side of anonymity, discerning the in(di)visibility of both concepts establishes a spectrum that exposes how the misreading of one's state of opacity succumbs a position of resistance to failure.

The second chapter, titled "Revolting Machines: Mechanics of Resistance in *El Reino de este Mundo*, *Écue-Yamba-Ó*, and *Invisible Man,*" continues the development of the in(di)visible by showing how it stands within the critical discourse of power versus authority. With a continued analysis of *Invisible Man* and incorporating readings of *El reino de este*

mundo and *Écue-Yamba-Ó*, this chapter explores how the thematic of industry and labor depicted present a framework of resistance that sets in motion the positions of revolt. The chapter begins by analyzing moments across the three novels where industrial machinery inflicts physical trauma on the characters in the story. These scenes reaffirm that Carpentier and Ellison cast the relationship between industry and labor as inherently violent. The shift away from the individual acts of resistance of the characters discussed in the first chapter, towards the text itself using individual characters to enact a critique of oppressive power dynamics reveals that literature is a mode of political resistance for Carpentier and Ellison. In this regard, both authors write resistance not in the passive sense of enduring to survive, but rather, as it has once again emerged in the global conscious, an act of subverting power itself.

The chapter then moves on to addressing how the subverting of power in these three novels reappropriates then inverts gestures of oppression. Carpentier and Ellison deploy the male gaze and show how its capacity for objectification goes beyond gendered power dynamics and intersects with racial politics. Reading how Carpentier and Ellison interrogate the manifestation of desire shows how the in(di)visible reconfigures comparisons by destabilizing the either/or structure of binary oppositions. Diving into the tension that forms a binary rather than examining the two concepts that might frame it allows for a deeper understanding of what manifests as a legitimate act of resistance when

confronting the dynamics of power. Looking at instances of sporadic violence in the novels not as isolated events, but rather, as moments of force where power, authority, and resistance intersect, calls into question the role of physical violence in the dismantling of modern power structures.

The final chapter, titled "The Parallax Paradox: Reconciling the In(di)visible in the Final Novels", explores Carpentier's *La consagración de le primavera* and Ellison's posthumous work *Three Days Before the Shooting…* in order to show how the in(di)visible is also at work in antonymous concepts. A critique of the conditions of exile and return as presented in these two works reinforces the need for discerning the in(di)visibilities of our own ideological positions. This comparative approach adds to the ongoing scholarship of Carpentier and Ellison and shows how these writers can help us make sense of our own contemporary moment and world. The first section of the chapter interrogates the relationship between experience and memory in the process of forming identities. Analyzing how certain characters across the novels embody the privileging of experience over memory and vice versa illustrates how the formation of their individual worldviews connects to a larger historical perspective. The second section concludes the final chapter by reconciling conceptualizations of origin and destination in order to further the position that the in(di)visible is not simply a means of extricating the synonymous but also establishes a

perspective from which to reconcile disparate positions. In so doing, an understanding of ideologies, and not just bodies, being mobile across geographical markers anchors the possibility of diasporic transitions.

The conclusion of this dissertation grapples with the limitations of the in(di)visible as a tool for literary analysis and imagines what role it could play not just in the realm of theory, but also in our pedagogy. Beyond the dissertation, I conclude, the in(di)visible can foster the development of creativity as a practice to move away from the static and concrete thinking that standardized testing tends to value indirectly. Understanding creativity as a language shared across academic and professional disciplines posits the inevitability that it must have a grammar to ground its interdisciplinarity. Discerning the grammar of creativity is a step toward reconciling the increasing divide between perceptions of STEM education and the humanities. Branded as innovation, creativity has been commoditized and weaponized against our academic fields that must now prove concrete worth in the face of a cultural shift away from inherent value. The humanities must stake a position of resistance within the tension it shares with STEM education to impart the soul into what pedagogy as the twenty-first century progresses is going to look like. An evolution of standard practices will only reinforce the status quo and underserve an increasingly diverse student population. Evolution is not the counterpoint to Revolution, its Resistance.

Chapter 1

Discerning the In(di)visible: Invisibility and Anonymity in *Invisible Man*, *El Acoso*, and *Los Pasos Perdidos*

Introduction

In the natural world, various animal species use camouflage as a means of defense against predators and just as many others deploy it as a means to capture prey. This is generally achieved by either crypsis or mimesis: the organism in question will make itself harder to see or will disguise itself as something else, respectively. The ultimate goal is survival whether it come, on the one hand, from the prey not being eaten or, on the other, the predator in question finding sustenance. As such, camouflage allows for the simultaneous disruption and upholding of the natural order; in some instances, the stronger predator will have the natural advantage and in others, the weaker prey has the leverage. For modern-day humans, the idea of a camouflaged person conjures images of the soldier in battledress; here, perhaps even more poignantly, the goal remains the same as in other species: survival. While easily recognized in a civilian setting, that familiar pattern on the field uniforms of the armed-forces of several nations achieve camouflage in conflict situations

through the concept of disruptive coloring, which is most easily described as the use of a contrasting pattern that will break up the outlines of a given object and render it formless. In other words, objects acquire the attributes of being unseen as a consequence of disruptive coloring.

In the human context of undocumented immigrants in the United States, for example, both conservative and liberal politicians invoke the metaphor of "bringing them out of the shadows"[1] when discussing the goals and merits of their immigration policies while ignoring the importance of acknowledging the reality that the shadows being cast in the first place do not belong to the undocumented, and that their unseen presence is a consequence of American Capitalism. Such a miscalculation is more than semantic and speaks to a larger inability to discern among categories of the unseen that results in the conflation of designations that have distinct attributes. The error is manifest in the failure to recognize that an Invisible Man is not the same as an Anonymous Man; Invisibility allows for the unfettered wielding of power while Anonymity creates a collective that is lulled into submission by the illusion of visibility. Invisibility and Anonymity bracket the spectrum of the unseen not as opposites that seek to give form to a chasm of absence, but as distinct focal points that brings their own in(di)visibility into perspective. The concept of the in(di)visible stems from the idea of

[1] This rhetoric was most recently invoked in discussing DACA and the legal status of Dreamers.

opacity as developed by Édouard Glissant in *Poetics of Relation* (1990). For Glissant, Relation is the conceptualization of shared knowledge; filiation-based cultures, however, privilege their own knowledge systems and as a consequence, especially in the colonial context, leads to the domination of one culture by an other. For Glissant, the meeting of different knowledge systems makes manifest opacity because it challenges how the systems in questions make sense of the world. The opaque state is unsettling and triggers a desire to return to transperency by the dominant culture forcing the minor culture to assimilate or by destroying it. Because of this, Glissant privileges opacity as a state of equality through distinction and concludes, "Widespread consent to specific opacities is the most straightforward equivalent of nonbarbarism….We clamor for the right to opacity for everyone."[2] From this perspective, establishing the invisible/anonymous counterpoint seeks to take the concept of opacity further by positing their in(di)visibility as a mechanism that presents the frequencies on which groups and individuals negotiate human difference.

Both Alejo Carpentier and Ralph Ellison left behind a body of work that is a testament to the unseen, to the minor voices whose shouts barely register as whispers on the scales of power, yet through language, these two authors conduct that minor chorus into a symphony that mimics inner thought. Although the oeuvre of Carpentier and Ellison

[2] Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, Translated by Betsy Wing, p. 194

navigated this consideration in different ways, some of their most poignant work begins with the same premise: the unnamed narrator. In *Los pasos perdidos* (1953) and *El acoso* (1956), Carpentier presents the reader with first-person narrators who remain unnamed to the reader throughout the entirety of the narrative even though it is evident that the characters they interact with are familiar with their appellations. On the other hand, Ellison's main character in *Invisible Man* (1952) never reveals his birth name, but rather, self-identifies and declares himself to be an "invisible man," thus remaining unnamed, in a strict sense, throughout the work. The importance of this contrast stems from the ways in which the protagonists deploy their agency. Carpentier's main characters wish to remain unnamed because they are running away from something that eventually catches up to them, therefore, any perceived agency is simply a postponing of the inevitable. Ellison's narrator, however, is doing the opposite, he is running towards something that continues to elude him, which in turn makes his acknowledged refusal to divulge his name an affirmation of agency. While one might make the assumption that the unnamed characters in Carpentier's work and Ellison's "invisible man" are simply anonymous narrators for the sake of identifying narrative structure, the reality is that when taking into account how invisibility and anonymity form distinct, yet equal modes of identity, we can unpack how the in(di)visible as human difference determines and distinguishes the formation of these characters within the context of the novels. When

understanding the in(di)visible as the position from which the synonymous forms of a given construct can be extricated, we can begin to formulate how such a conceptualization allows for rendering analogous terms discordant in service of further inquiry. Thus, by looking at the texts of Carpentier and Ellison and observing the consequences of having the narrators remain unnamed, the distinction between the Invisible and the Anonymous becomes apparent along with recognizing how the in(di)visibility of these two concepts allows them to refuse conflation.

The overview of the novels that follows, sets the stage for the conclusion that when used as terms that categorize human difference, one should embrace Invisibility over Anonymity. Carpentier's short novel, *El acoso,* depicts two young men who share the novel's narration and suffer different fates as a consequence of how they engage with the social constructs presented in the novel. One man is an architecture student turned terrorist who is being pursued by the authorities for his role in delivering a bomb and the other is a music student and part-time ticket seller for an orchestra that entertains Havana's elite. Both men wish to be unseen, and although the circumstances of the novel dictate that each of them have different reasons for desiring such a state, the events that unfold portray how differing interpretations of how one avoids being seen, produces different outcomes. In, *Los pasos perdidos*, Carpentier gives us the journey of a failed musicologist, who produces soundtracks

for film, into the Amazon in search of ancient musical instruments at the request of his old academic advisor. His experiences throughout the narrative lead him to disavow modern societies and provide the inspiration to begin writing what the narrator comes to believe is a significant piece of modern music. The narrator, however, misunderstands the possibilities of his unseen state and by abandoning that which his disavowal allows him to find through Invisibility, he succumbs to his desire of being seen and renders himself Anonymous and in so doing, loses access to both his previous and current way of life.

Ellison's *Invisible Man* is perhaps the most audacious in its approach of the unnamed protagonist in that the narrator begins his fictional autobiographical narration by openly decalaring that he is invisible. Furthermore, the narrator frames a black man's experience in the United States of America in a tone that presents the possibility of the reading journey as futile. As such, when the narrator suggests that the reader won't be able to conceive the narrator’s Invisibility the challenge of the reading is placed front and center. In that sense, the withholding of his birth name and the affirmation of being an "invisible man" suggests that this narrative already grounds itself in its condition and is able to explore the rigors of consciousness necessary to open the doors of possibility when one chooses Invisibility. In a way, Invisible Man as narrator acknowledges that after we come-of-age in our wourld we must inevitably come-to-terms with the reality that entails.

When taken collectively, at several points the protagonists in these three works process the state and/or desire of being unseen in gestures that move them towards the Invisibility that makes resistance possible or the Anonymity that abdicates the Subject to the extent that at the end of the work, each protagonist is one or the other. By using Glissant's theorizations of Relation, Opacity, and Transparency as points of departure, I will show how my notion of in(di)visibility, when discerned as a product of distinguishing between Invisibility and Anonymity categorizes how such determinations authorize a correlation with the ongoing conflict for human equality. By looking at two authors who were writing around the same time period, in different languages, and in different countries whose current political distance belies the intertwined and racialized histories the two nations share, my hope is to show how in their art we can find the lessons to the successes and failures we're already repeating.

Seeing the Unseen in Invisible Man

In discussing the task of Ellison's novel, Kenneth Warren states: "*Invisible Man* was an assertion of identity that could, through expressing the ideals of a democratic society, remain at once cultural and political."[3] While there is no question that at the time of its publication the identity asserted in the text was that of a Black citizen living in the United States,

[3] Kenneth W. Warren, *So Black and Blue: Ralph Ellison and the Occasion of Criticism*, p. 41

unpacking how the narrator processes the idea of Invisibility and comes to embrace it as a rejection of Anonymity shows how *Invisible Man* maintains its relevancy as a cultural imprint whose mark becomes more pronounced over time. In fact, the narrator's closing remarks, ending with the question, "Who knows but that, on the lower frequencies, I speak for you?"[4] encourage a revisiting of the novel to determine for whom has it spoken, is speaking, or will speak. In other words, who dwells on the lower frequencies and how can they exercise a position of power from that position? The narrator's word choice is telling because "lower" in the context of discussing "frequencies" does not imply a structure of hierarchy. In the mathematical sense, frequency can provide temporal, spacial, and angular measurements that determine the duration of a particular cycle and how often that particular event may repeat per unit of time. Therefore, by placing his speech act on the "lower frequencies," Invisible Man[5] characterizes his experience as something that occurs over time, with longer intervals of presence and absence. When applying this description to the novel's attempt to depict the "ideals of a democratic society," as Warren suggests, it becomes clear that a story about a man who comes to terms with his Invisibility privileges the act of resistance and not revolt as the principle ideal of progress in democracy and further explore in the discussions of power

[4] Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 1994 Modern Library Edition, p. 572
[5] In discussing the novel, I use the italicized form to refer to the novel itself and the capitalized non-italicized form in reference to the novel's narrator.

versus authority in the second chapter. That ideal, progress through resistance, is what characterizes the narrator's move towards Invisibility as an act that resists a society seeking to see him Anonymously, that is, to see him as a void.

The novel begins and ends with the narrator's theoretical musings on his Invisibility. In the most visual sense, the ideas that bracket the novel cloak the text with a sense of the unseen that can only be unpacked by distinguishing how we recognize and categorize in(di)visibility. Invisible Man works through the irony that what makes people not see him is his most visible physical characteristic: his blackness. Moreover, the narrator initiates the process of distinguishing his own Invisibility from other forms of the unseen when he states:

> That invisibility to which I refer occurs because of a peculiar disposition of the eyes of those with whom I come into contact. A matter of construction of their inner eyes, those eyes with which they look through their physical eyes upon reality. I am not complaining, nor am I protesting either. It is sometimes advantageous to be unseen, although it is most often rather wearing on the nerves.[6]

Here, Invisibility is not an absence; it is manifest as a consequence of one's insistance to only percieve the singularity of a presence. This means that those who refuse to see and acknowledge Invisible Man's

[6] *Invisible Man*, p. 3

humanity are doing so precisely because they only see the singularity of his blackness and are, therefore, incapable of perceiving a collective humanity. This is what allows the mobilizing of Invisibility as an act of resistance: in the end, he still sees himself as something and the possibilty of that something can always be a threat.

Furthermore, the narrator draws on the difference between himself and Griffin, the scientist in H.G. Wells' *The Invisible Man* (1897) in order to draw attention to the restrictions one might place on the notion of Invisibility. Griffin develops a formula that renders bodies invisible, his affliction was sought after and his invisibility manifest through his physical body; however, Invisible Man notes that his own invisibility is a consequence of a difference that exists between himself and within the conceptual body of another person, the "inner eye" as he puts it. In other words, for Griffin Invisibility is embodied by the individual while for Invisible Man Invisibility is forced upon the individual by another. Therefore, the root of invisibility for Invisible Man is not derived from a bodily manifestation but rather, from how we perceive. One can raise the stakes of this comparison by taking a closer look at how Griffin's formula works at rendering the body invisible. The formula allows for light to bend around an object and because there is no light refraction, the object cannot be seen by the observer. The irony here is that essentially cloaking an object with light—by allowing it to pass around an object and not through it or off of it—is what grants that object invisibility. When

understood in this context, it becomes evident that some of the imagery in Ellison's work nods towards Wells' novel through a thematic re-appropriation of ideas. In fact, Ellison's Invisible Man muses at length about light:

> And I love light. Perhaps you'll think it strange that an invisible man should need light , desire light, love light. But maybe it is exactly because I *am* invisible. Light confirms my reality, gives birth to my form. A beautiful girl once told me of a recurring nightmare in which she lay in the center of a large dark room and felt her face expand until it filled the whole room, becoming a formless mass while her eyes ran in a bilious jelly up the chimney. And so it is with me. Without light I am not only invisible, but formless as well; and to be unaware of one's form is to live a death. I myself, after existing some twenty years, did not become alive until I discovered my invisibility.[7]

By focusing on the importance of bodily form, Invisible Man acknowledges that his Invisibility does not strip him of his agency and therefore, he is not angered by his Invisible state nor does he fear it; for him, formlessness is what brings about death. We must also note, however, that form, as Invisible Man conceives of it, is not a construct at all, at least in the sense of something that defines with the purpose of

[7] *Invisible Man*, p. 6

limiting or constricting. This is where we must distinguish between simple recognition versus the conceptual understanding of one's invisible state. As Invisible Man becomes aware of his Invisible condition, his desire to revolt against that condition risks his becoming Anonymous. It is not until he acknowledges the possibilities of resistance inherent to Invisibility that the narrator embraces this new conscious state and seeks to live through it.

Invisible Man is cognizant of the fact that there are various frequencies on which one speaks and that society bounds some of us to speak at certain registers. In this regard, there is a musicality that frames the use of language as means of communication. When discussing music, for example, Invisible Man states:

> There is a certain acoustical deadness in my hole, and when I have music I want to *feel* its vibration, not only with my ear but with my whole body.... I discovered a new analytical way of listening to music. The unheard sounds came through, and each melodic line existed of itself, stood out clearly from all the rest, said its piece, and waited patiently for other voices to speak. That night I found myself hearing not only in time, but I space as well.[8]

As a result of a critical analysis of his own Invisibility, Ellison's narrator posits that music possesses invisible qualities that are nevertheless an

[8] *Invisible Man*, pp. 7-8

integral part of the musical experience and while one can measure vibrations or frequencies, doing so is an act of reducing and dissecting in hopes of learning something new. Invisible Man cautions against such a reductive approach to categories of experience, for him "the new analytical way of listening to music" is not a more scientific way of listening with the ears, but rather *feeling* it with the body in such a way that brings forth the in(di)visibility and renders the music irreducible.

There is, however, a correlation that exists between knowledge and the ability to *see* in the conceptualization that the narrator develops. In presenting the dichotomous nature of Invisibility as he sees it, Invisible Man goes on to say:

> I've illuminated the blackness of my invisibility—and vice versa. And I play the invisible music of my isolation. The last statement doesn't seem just right, does it? But it is; you hear this music simply because music is heard and seldom seen, except by musicians. Could this compulsion to put my invisibility down in black and white be thus an urge to make music out of invisibility?…All sickness is not unto death, neither is invisibility.[9]

This passage further illustrates the role of the in(di)visible by positing that blackness and invisibility are not interdependent. The "music of [his] isolation" is the acceptance of this reality and the formation of a life

[9] *Invisible Man*, p. 13

towards Invisibility as the ultimate act of resistance. In the way that musicians form a population that *see* music by conceptualizing its in(di)visibilities, Invisible Man suggests that one can come to *see* the Invisible by recognizing and accepting the in(di)visible not as a reduction, but as that which is always and already in play. When taken as whole and in this context, then, Ellison's novel is a portrayal of how rebelling *towards* Invisibility is the true act of resistance because moving away from it, puts one on the path leading to Anonymity. That such a realization is necessary is evident in the epilogue's opening when Invisible Man states:

> So there you have all of it that's important. Or at least you almost have it. I'm an invisible man and it placed me in a hole—or showed the hole I was in, if you will—and I reluctantly accepted the fact. What else could I have done? Once you get used to it, reality is as irresistible as a club, and I was clubbed into the cellar before I caught the hint.[10]

After concluding the story that brings the reader to the narrator's current state, Invisible Man suggests that while he has given all the information necessary to comprehend his Invisible condition, it is possible that the observer may not "have it," in the sense that the reader has yet to take cognitive step of synthesizing the narrative so that they may recognize the form of his Invisibility by seeing the in(di)visible. Here, the "almost"

[10] *Invisible Man*, p. 563

uttered by the narrator is not an improvised withholding or the refusal to reveal an afterthought, but rather, it serves as a warning to the reader of the complacency inherent to confusing knowing with knowledge or action. It is Invisible Man's plea that the readers reflect on their own position, because *having it* is the only way he sees for one's joining him in the rise from a collective slumber.

Moreover, Invisible Man's ongoing struggle with his own revelation is apparent in how he amends his statement that being an invisible man placed him "in a hole." The narrator corrects himself and recognizes that embracing his invisibility is what allowed him to see the hole in the first place. This is not another literary flourish on the narrator's part, but rather, an affirmation that the subtlety in differentiating between Invisibility and Anonymity is such that it risks believing they are synonymous. Identifying these terms as synonyms presents visibility and presence as their opposites and, as a consequence of their connotation, the preferred condition. The simplicity of this structure, however, does not account for the reality that structures of power are predicated on alternatives. Therefore, by casting the opposite and not the alternative as that against which we must rebel, the hierarchy remains intact. Invisible Man cautions against this mirage of visibility by subverting the structure in his statement that, "after years of trying to adopt the opinions of others I finally rebelled. I am an invisible man. Thus I have come a long way and returned and boomeranged a long way from the point in society

toward which I originally aspired."[11] Again, the act of resistance is in the affirmation of Invisibility not in the rejection of it; furthermore, the use of boomerang in its verb form not only marks the narrator's return as a changed person to a situation that remains the same, it also carries the parallel meaning where the return of something causes harm to its originator. By making his Invisibility the marker of insurrection, society's intent to cast the narrator as Invisible backfires on the world he occupies. The narrator expands on the irony in the recoil of events with his thoughts on the state of color:

> Whence all this passion towards conformity anyway?—diversity is the word. Let man keep his many parts and you'll have no tyrant states. Why if they follow this conformity business they'll end up forcing me, an invisible man, to become white, which is not a color but the lack of one. Must I strive towards colorlessness?"[12]

As the novel nears its conclusion, Invisible Man briefly turns to the notion of color as a global concept. By alluding to tyrant states, not only does the narrator cast color as simply one of the alternatives in the categories of human difference, but he also posits the idea that striving towards colorlessness presents a perspective on the issue that is uniquely American. In other words, colorlessness is the state of being white in the United States because it is only within those borders that

[11] *Invisible Man*, p. 564
[12] *Invisible Man*, p. 567

his Americanness may be reduced to Blackness.[13] Diversity as the narrator suggests it, then, must not be reduced to act of inclusion but rather exapanded as a gesture of recognizing that color was already always present, that it is already in(di)visible.

Coming to terms with the reality that his reemergence is inevitable, Invisible Man concludes:

> The hibernation is over. I must shake off the old skin and come up for breath. There's a stench in the air, which, from this distance underground, might be the smell either of death or spring—I hope spring. But don't let me trick you, there *is* death in the smell of spring and in the smell of thee as in the smell of me. And if nothing more, invisibility has taught my nose to classify the stenches of death.[14]

In claiming the ability to differentiate among the "stenches of death," Invisible Man alludes to the reality that all things eventually cease to be as they were and how his Invisibility allows for that change, ongoing unto death. That spring carries with it tones of winter's death and autumn's decay shows that even the cyclical is already encompassed with in(di)visibilities. Now, the natural frequency of that cycle allows the narrator to emerge into his Invisibility made possible by the realization and rejection of being submerged in the lulls of Anonymity. That the

[13] *In a Strange Country*, an Ellison short story, deals with the concept of race and borders. The story deals with a young Black American who is serving in the Navy and while in a foreign country realizes that the light-skinned citizens of that country view him primarily as American; the color of his skin is not a factor.
[14] Invisible Man, p. 571

narrator ends his story with talk of seasons, cycles, and frequencies, suggests the possibility that, if we've looked and actually *seen*, his new beginning may also belong to us.

Misreading Invisibility in *El Acoso*

In order to continue my investigation, I now turn to Alejo Carpentier's short novel *El acoso.* The text refers to the main protagonist as "*el acosado*" through the entirety of the novel. This gesture is referential to the ambivalence the title of the text embodies; although the reader has the accounts of several moments and actions, there is very little to contextualize the historical placing of the novel. As a result, the novel resists the singularity of one political event. In this way, the novel moves beyond the thematics of political violence and delves into its in(di)visibility. Alfred MacAdam's 1989 translation of the work's title as *The Chase* fares better than the original English translation of *Manhunt*, yet is stripped of the nuances of siege, harassment, and persecution that *acosar*, the infinitive form of *acoso/acosado* carries. This ambivalent nuance exacerbates the textual tension created by the presence of a protagonist who is unnamed to the reader, but rather is identified by an adjective that describes him as one who is being sought for punishment. From this perspective, the in(di)visibility arises from the tension inherent to the political act that manifests as the suspense between the unnamed protagonist and the violence that threatens to befall him. The unnamed

body of the narrator is both absent and present in the sense that while no one identity has claim to it, the possibility of the body being acted upon violently makes its reality immediate and visceral on the textual body. In so doing, the text challenges the assumptions present in the tension of unknown violence on unnamed bodies by having the events of the novel take place in a theater, an architectural symbol to the house of privilege and a place that plays out drama and fiction. Scholars have looked previously at the role that tension, present in various forms, plays in the shaping of this text. As Eduardo González states: "El propio concepto del orden resulta trágicamente ambiguo en el relato….De un lado se halla el orden del terror, y del otro el arte y la liturgia, y en el centro, viéndolos negarse en cualquier simetría, esta el acosado"[15] / "The concept of order in the story turns out to be tragically ambiguous….From one side hails the order of terror, from the other art and liturgy, and in the center, watching them deny themselves any sense of symmetry, is *el acosado*" (Translation mine). While González is correct to point out that the tension present among the concepts of terror, art and worship in the text denies it a cohesive sense of order, I'd like to press the point and argue that the external forces causing the tension--terror, art and liturgy--exist only by virtue of the internal tensions that are already present as a consequence of the Anonymity of *el acosado's* body. Moreover, this internal tension correlates with the presence of the also

[15] Eduardo González, "El acoso: Lectura, escritura e historia," in *El cuento hispanoamericano ante la crítica*, edited by E. Pupo Walker (Madrid, 1980) pp. 126-149 (p. 145).

unnamed ticket seller whose presence and narration opens and concludes the novel. In other words, although critics such as González Echevarria suggest that "the text [of *El acoso*] is an empty sign that will contain all contingent historical events,"[16] I will show how such argumentation hollows out the unnamed body in such a way that strips it of its agency and ignores how looming violence can play a role in the categorizations of Anonymity versus Invisibility. These measures discern how in(di)visibility, as it functions in this particular work, allows the text to provide a commentary on social class and race that speaks to notions of difference that are overshadowed by the political and aesthetic overtones of this novel.

Although *El acoso* unpacks events and circumstances that occur over longer periods of time, the story occurs during the fifty minutes, roughly, that it would take for an audience to be seated, listen to a performance of Beethoven's 3rd Symphony, and exit the theater. The novel has two protagonists share the narrative load: one is a young man who operates the ticket booth at a ritzy Havana Symphony Hall and the other a young male architecture student who is being sought by the authorities for his role in a terrorist plot that results in the bombing and murder of an unnamed Cuban political figure. Even though they lead similar lifestyles--they live in the same neighborhood and even share an obsession and one-sided love affair with the same prostitute, Estrella--

[16] Roberto González-Echevarria, *Alejo Carpentier: The Pilgrim at Home*, p. 211

the two men never make each other's acquaintance because at the novel's conclusion, the consequences of *el acosado's* actions become reality when he is executed by the authorities in the theater where he naively sought refuge. The novel opens from the perspective of the unnamed ticket seller who is sitting at work in his ticket booth while reading a biography of Beethoven during the current performance's intermission. In front of him a high society crowd prepares to re-enter the theater and listen to the concluding piece, a performance of Beethoven's Symphony No. 3 in E-flat major (Op. 55). That this is the Symphony being performed is interesting because at one point Beethoven sought to dedicate this particular work to Napoleon, with whom he later became disillusioned. In this context, the performance as a backdrop for the story sets the stage for a tale in which the heroes and ideologies of the characters unravel towards chaotic violence, a scene for disenchantment. Moreover, it is also relevant to note that because this particular symphony is better known as the *Eroica*, which translates into "heroic" from the Italian. The presence of the musical piece in the novel places emphasis on the act of heroism and not on the individual hero because the gesture as intent matters more than the individual position. This de-centering of the individual is crucial for the narrative because the novel has two protagonists, *el acosado* and the ticket seller. When we meet the ticket seller at the opening of the novel, we immediately recognize his self-awareness as an outsider:

> *Tal impudor era prueba de su inexistencia para las mujeres que llenaban aquel vestíbulo tratando de permanecer donde un espejo les devolviera la imagen de sus peinados y atuendos. Las pieles, levadas por tal calor, ponían alguna humedad en los cuellos y los escotes, y, para aliviarse de su peso, las dejaban resbalar, colgándoselas de codo a codo como espesos festones de venatería. La mirada huyó de lo cercano inalcanzable.*[17] / Such immodesty was proof he did not exist for the women who filled the lobby, trying to stand where a mirror would reflect their coiffures and gowns. The furs they wore in spite of the heat made moisture collect on their necks and bosoms. To relieve themselves of the weight, they would let their stoles slip down, draping them from elbow to elbow across their backs as if they were thick festoons in a painted hunting scene. His eyes fled from what was so near yet so unattainable.[18]

Although the ticket seller, who we come to know is an aspiring musician and admirer of Beethoven, possesses the knowledge required to appreciate the musical performance to which he serves as a gatekeeper, he is nevertheless barred from experiencing such a performance reserved for high society by virtue of his status as working class. The ticket seller's position as outsider is further accentuated by the level of access

[17] Alejo Carpentier, *El acoso*, 2005, pp. 20-21. All citations in Spanish are from the Lectorum edition.
[18] Alejo Carpentier, *The Chase*, 1989, p. 5. All citations translated into English are from the FSG edition.

his job grants him. While he is free to listen to the performance from his ticket booth, he still sits in front of the closed doors of the main theatre this barrier not only separates him from the paying customers but goes as far as distorting the acoustic signature of any parts of the performance that might reach his ears. The ticket seller, however, reclaims a sense of agency by becoming an observer of the very same world that casts him out while simultaneously requiring his presence as a reaffirmation of otherness. By recognizing that the perceived high-society hierarchy is entirely dependent on his subordinated presence, the ticket seller resists becoming Anonymous as a cog in the power structure he inhabits and instead, becomes its Invisible spectator.

This is evident in the ticket seller's observing how the elaborateness of the attire reaches the point of absurd excess by the wearing of furs on a tropical island, and how such absurdity alludes to a sense of early primitivism when the wearing of an animal's skin acknowledged one's dominance over the natural order. This primitivist exposition of hierarchical superiority is heightened by the woman's vulgarity for whispering that weather warranted putting one in the mood for sexual intercourse, the nearby presence of the ticker seller unnoticed. These details continue to paint the portrait of caricature for the ticket seller as the high society world before him, which is so insistent on his not belonging, fails to recognize how inherently out of place it is. However, it is not as simple as his not existing for these women and the

men who accompany them. The observation of the Symphony attendees fulfilling the narcissistic desire of gazing at themselves in the mirror, points to a process of continuous reassessment that shows how the people who occupy this world fail to exist for each other because they only exist for themselves. For them, as individuals, the discomfort of their clothing and sweat caused from the body heat generated by the stoles they wear manifest themselves as forms of personal suffering for the sake of appearances that ought to be admirable. They internalize the suffering to maintain a sense of classist appropriateness and mask it with extravagance to justify themselves as a collective society. It is this focus on the individual that does not allow them to recognize how they all suffer for the sake of maintaining appearances for if they saw the suffering in the other, even those who they believe to be like themselves, they would realize that they, too, suffer for the perpetuity of their societal ruse, the same ruse that requires the presence of a ticket seller to remind them that they have access to the music simply because they can pay for it and not because it informs a crucial aspect of their collective identity. The ability to access things is what defines them and the price they pay for access to the performance on this particular evening is the use of violence to decorate the body, for degrees of violence are what the text uncovers as being in(di)visible from human difference and even the act of reading.

The ticket seller then begins to reflect on the world outside the theater:

> *Contemplaba con ternura, desde abajo, aquel piso destartalado, caído en descuido de pobres, tan semejante a las mal alumbradas viviendas de su pueblo, donde el encenderse de las velas por una muerte, entre paredes descascaradas y jaulas envueltas en manteles, equivalía a una suntuaria iluminación de tabernáculo, en medio de muebles cuya pobreza se acrecía, junto al relumbrante enchapado de los candelabros.*[19] / From his vantage point in the ticket booth, he tenderly contemplated that broken down apartment, now fallen into the careless hands of the poor, which looked so much like the badly lighted dwellings of his hometown. There, when a death occurred, the lighting of the candles amid crumbling walls, bird cages draped with tablecloths, furniture whose poverty was magnified by the presence of the glittering silver of the candelabra, caused rooms to take on something of the sumptuous illumination of a tabernacle.[20]

Here, the ticket seller's mind turns to the world outside of the theater as he projects his own past—living in the countryside—onto the current state of the city's poor. There is a tone of resentment in the nostalgic

[19] Carpentier, *El acoso*, p. 21
[20] Carpentier, *The Chase*, pp. 5-6

memory that places the blame on the poor for the deterioration of the city's structure, which stems from the belief that given the opportunity to live in such a place before its fall, his appreciation for the finer things would have brought about a different result. This speculation reveals the ticket seller's isolation from both the world from which he came and the world to which he craves belonging. His class standing, as a product of his past, denies him the ability to be a consumer of music and his amateur status means he cannot produce that music for consumption in the present. This dual resentment of his past and present does not allow the ticket seller to recognize how his duality allows him to break from this isolation where he belongs to neither world. By resenting his origin as the antithesis of the world to which he aspires, he unknowingly rejects the possibility of a double consciousness[21] to facilitate the synthesizing of his current situation as a means of escaping it. Instead, he equates the candle-light living of his current situation to the memory of his hometown wakes, rendering his circumstance a symbolic death that stands in conjunction with the symbolism of the literal death portrayed by *el acosado's* execution at the novel's end.

The ticket seller's presence grounds the reader in the symphonic world of the novel and fittingly, through him, we get our first glimpse at *el acosado*. Moreover, because both characters share the novel's narration, the ticket seller's observations set the stage for the

[21] I am indebted here to W.E.B. Du Bois' terminology and theoretical work.

performative actions that occur in *el acosado's* narrative sequences. Hence, the shared narrative structure does not give two unique perspectives; rather, they form a melody as a relational narrative that mimics the musical performance that stands as the novel's backdrop. This relational narrative, however, is dependent on both the protagonists being unknown to each other as well as being unnamed to the reader. Both characters live in close enough proximity that *el acosado* recognizes the music of the performance from hearing the same music emanating from the ticket seller's living quarters; they share the bed of the same mulatta prostitute, Estrella; and they both partake in the economic transactions that puts the novel's discussion of social difference into perspective. Yet, despite the factors that link them, the two characters have not seen each other, even from a distance. This is evident when *el acosado* runs into the theater in search safety and throws a banknote at the ticket seller:

> *Frente a él quedaba un billete nuevo, arrojado por el impaciente. Debía tratarse de un gran aficionado, aunque no tuviera cara de extranjero, ya que la audición de una Sinfonía, ejecutada en fin de concierto, le había merecido un precio que era cinco veces el de la butaca más cara.*[22] / In front of him there was a new bank note, tossed there by the impatient man. He must have been a great music lover, but he did not

[22] Carpentier, *El acoso*, pp. 23-24

> look like a foreigner even though he paid five times the value of the most expensive box to hear a symphony performed at the end of a concert.[23]

It is evident that the ticket seller has no knowledge of who *el acosado* is even though their lives have so much in common. In fact, the ticket seller has a moment of extreme confusion because a man who is not dressed like the other attendants is carrying currency valued at five times the most expensive seat in the house and is willing to spend it on only a part of the entire concert performance. Although the ticket seller concludes that *el acosado* must be a music-loving foreigner, he still believes that he does not "look" like a foreigner based on his appearance. The irony, however, is that like the ticket seller, *el acosado* is also operating in a foreign space and is an "*extranjero*"—a foreigner—in the sense that he lives in a world outside of the symphony. It is precisely because of *el acosado's* position as an outsider that the ticket seller has no ethical objection to taking the singular bill worth five times the value of the most expensive box seat and using it for his own means.

Furthermore, by tracing the various exchanges that occur using the same bill, one sees how these financial transactions continue to expose the reality of social difference that the narrative presents. First, *el acosado* receives the banknote as payment from one political figure for having carried out the services of delivering a bomb to another political

[23] Carpentier, *The Chase*, p. 8

figure in an assassination plot organized by the members of a resistance movement against the Cuban political establishment. *El acosado* finds himself fleeing for his life from both the authorities because of his link to the assassination attempt and from members of the unnamed dissident group who are seeking revenge because *el acosado* has identified individuals from their group to the authorities. With nowhere else to go, he tries to seek refuge with Estrella, the mulatta prostitute who also shares a bed with the ticket seller. *El acosado* asks Estrella to send a message to the members of the dissident group and gives her the same bill to pay for the use of a taxi as transportation to carry out the errand. When she tries to pay the driver upon her return, the taxi driver accuses her of giving him counterfeit money. Estrella returns the bill to *el acosado,* telling him the money is no good, and asks him to leave because she must offer her body as payment to the driver in order to avoid him calling the authorities to report her. When *el acosado* is spotted wandering the streets by members of the dissident group, he runs into the theater and he throws the currency towards the ticket seller who realizes that because there was no documentation of the transaction, he can keep the money for himself. With his newfound monetary windfall, the ticket seller chooses to go see Estrella, whose companionship he unknowingly shares with *el acosado*. When Estrella recognizes the bill, she rejects the ticket seller, shows him the door, and tells him that the money is no good. After the ticket seller returns to the

theater and *el acosado* has been executed, he hands the bill to the authorities and informs them that the dead man had been passing off counterfeit currency. The officer, realizing that the note is legal tender and not counterfeit, pockets the money and informs the ticket seller that the bill will be entered into evidence.

Estrella triggers this sequence of exchanges since she is the first to be accused of having counterfeit currency and this accusation, in turn, is what launches the sequence of events that result in *el acosado's* execution. Because the exchange at the end of the novel confirms the authenticity of the bill, it becomes evident that particular factors—race, social class—underscore the initial assumption that cause the false declaration of the bill as counterfeit because those who possess it already discredit its authenticity. Understanding these factors point towards how the social dynamics of the novel work in the formation of a structure of who can claim authority. The taxi driver claims that the bill is counterfeit not because he believes it to be so, but rather, because he does not believe that a mulatta woman could be in possession of an authentic banknote of such a large denomination. From this perspective, the recognition of her blackness delegitimizes her ability to claim the authority that the bank and government place on the currency and she decides use her body, a means of agency she does have access to, in order to settle a debt that did not require settling.

Such an outcome posits race as the originating catalyst of human difference that sets the final sequence of the novel in motion. She is the only character who is given a name in the narrative, Estrella, "star" when translated and fittingly since she provides direction and situates both *el acosado* within the context of the narrative and she is the one who essentially guides *el acosado* to his execution by putting the authorities on his trail when they come knocking on her door. Estrella is the character who is given an identity by name and finds agency through her understanding of the market system of exchange whereby sex is a stand-in for money. The men who pay for her sex work do not have to save her, by using her agency to find an alternative mode of payment she uses her own agency to survive, just as she has always done. Because of this, her informing the authorities of *el acosado's* whereabouts is not an act of self-preservation but rather, a gesture through which she reveals her agency by being the person who makes *el acosado* visible. Estrella sheds light on the location of the man being chased and in so doing, renders him visible and capable of being killed.

Estrella anchors the text by holding down the narrative fabric that gives the story perspective. *El acosado's* visible Anonymity stands in stark contrast with the practiced Invisibility of the ticket seller as described after he leaves Estrella's home where she incorrectly informs him that the money is counterfeit:

> *El hombre, en rabiosa carrera, alcanzó el alero del mercado, donde los pavos asomaban cabezas andrajosas por sobre la cochambre de sus jaulas. El olor a corral, a gallinas, entre respiros de huerta y de aradura, lo llevó, en un incontenible cerrar de ojos, al mapa de la Gran Cañada, cuyo cauce, erizado de junqueras, era el camino que tanto le había permitido jugar, allá, al Hombre Invisible.*[24] / Angrily running, the man reached the eaves of the market, where the turkeys poked their ragged heads out of their filthy cages. The smell of the farmyard, of chickens, along with whiffs of gardens and plowing, took him back in a flash to the map of the Gran Cañada River, whose bed, bristling with rushes, was the road that had so often allowed him to play the game of Invisible Man.[25]

The ticket seller's role as observer of the social circles to which he aspires suggests how conscious he is of his own Invisibility and shows how he has developed that Invisibility over time. Like Ellison's protagonist, the ticket seller also treats being an "Invisible Man" as a game that reaps rewards, but is dependent on the need for "hibernation," as the protagonist in *Invisible Man* reminds his reader on several occasions. Nevertheless, the ticket seller's own move towards Invisibility and the textual embodiment of achieving such a state allows him to function as a

[24] Carpentier, *El acoso*, p. 38
[25] Carpentier, The Chase, p. 25

foil for *el acosado.* Functioning as this foil hinges on Estrella's own understanding of the moves between Invisibility and Anonymity caused by her sex work. Estrella's Invisibility is her revolt against others deeming her inferior, she does not depend on a male protector with whom she might share her earnings from commoditizing her body, nor does she conduct her business in a way that makes what she does visible to an audience. She also does not seek out clients, she gets to choose them and they come to her. The argument with the taxi driver over the counterfeit bill is a confrontation made visible to the entire neighborhood that jeopardizes her Invisibility and for Estrella, visibility is vulnerability. By using her body to render payment to the taxi driver so he won't report her to the authorities, Estrella assures that her Invisibility remains intact. Estrella recognizes the possibilities that Invisibility holds as a mechanism for resistance and survival and like the ticket seller, is able to return to her hibernation when she informs the authorities of the whereabouts of *el acosado*, an action that renders the body of *el acosado* textually visible:

> *(…ese latido, que me abre a codazos; ese vientre en borbollones, ese corazón que se me suspende, arriba, traspasándome con una aguja fría; golpes sordos que me suben del centro y descargan en las sienes, en los brazos, en los muslos; aspiro a espasmos; no basta la boca, no basta la nariz; el aire me viene a sorbos cortos, me llena, se queda, me*

ahoga, para irse luego a bocanadas secas, dejándome apretado, plegado, vacío, y es luego el subir de los huesos, el rechinar, el tranco; quedar encima de mi, como colgado de mí mismo, hasta que el corazón, de un vuelco helado, me suelte los costillares para pegarme de frente, abajo del pecho; dominar este sollozo en seco; respirar luego, pensándolo; apretar sobre al aire quedado; abrir al lo alto; apretar ahora; más lento: uno, dos, uno, dos, uno, dos…[26] / (…This pounding that elbows its way right through me; this bubbling stomach; this heart above that stops beating, piercing me with a cold needle; muffled punches that seem to well up from my very core and smash on my temples, my arms, my thighs; I breathe in gasps, my mouth can't do it; my nose can't do it; the air only comes in tiny sips, fills me, stays inside me, suffocates me, only to depart in mouthfuls leaving me wrenched, doubled over, empty; and then my bones straighten, grind, shudder; I stand above myself, as if hung from myself, until my heart in a frozen surge, lets go of my ribs so it can strike me from the front, below my chest; I have no control over this dry sobbing; then breathe, concentrating on it; first, breathe the air in that remains ;

[26] Carpentier, *El acoso*, pp. 26-27

then breathe out; now breathe in, more slowly: one, two, one, two, one, two…[27]

This scene plays out the thought process of *el acosado* as he takes his seat in the theater, hoping it will provide him a means of escape from the men who are after him. The text then recreates his affective response to fear, letting the reader see and feel the physical effects of that fear on the body. He rushes to his seat, out of breath, and begins conducting the recuperation to soothe his body. His description, however, shows how the narrative is having the opposite effect; the text exposes the body of *el acosado*, rips it open on the page so that the reader can see it made visible, see its inner workings as the symphony of recuperation plays on in the mind of *el acosado*. All the while, he is ignorant of the reality of the unwrapping that the text is performing on his body is far more violent than the inevitable and swift execution that he will meet shortly. His mind will continue to plot his means of escape but his body knows the he can no longer be Invisible, and so while his mind runs off, his body, stationary in a crowded theater prepares to die. His ongoing thought process reaffirms how incapable of being Invisible and desperately out of his own reality *el acosado* is; he imagines himself having left his body, being above it, looking down as the orchestra of bodily functions which has reached its crescendo begins to wind down towards death, a performance unraveled on itself and whose only spectator is ignorant of

[27] Carpentier, *The Chase*, pp. 12-13

its symbolism. *El acosado* fails to see that his mind is not suspended from his body but rather, the inverse has taken place: his body is hanged from his mind he is lifeless and in every sense of the concept, out of place.

The language of music establishes order, but its rules must be known in order read and speak that language. El acosado's inability to recognize or follow the rules of that game makes evident the severity of his current state of visibility:

> *Comprendo ahora por qué los de la fila no miran sus programas; comprendo por qué no aplauden entre los trozos; se tienen que tocar en su orden, como en la misa se coloca el Evangelio antes del Credo, y el Credo antes del Ofertorio…*[28]
> / I understand why the people in my row don't look at their programs; I understand why they don't applaud between sections: the parts have to be played in their own order, the way in Mass the Gospel comes before the Credo, and the Credo before the Offertory…[29]

Because he does not understand how music works, unlike the ticket seller, *el acosado* claps during a pause in the performance, assuming that silence meant that the piece was finished. His failure to know that in music, silences are equally crucial to the piece and experience of listening as the played notes exacerbates his condition because his out-

[28] Carpentier, *El acoso*, p. 33
[29] Carpentier, *The Chase*, p. 18

of-place clapping signals his location to those pursuing him. Once again, by failing to understand how Invisibility functions as an absence that is already present, he succumbs to being an Anonymous man, now visible to everyone in the theater. In his ongoing desire to find salvation in God, *el acosado* attempts to comfort himself, linking his newfound recognition of musical sequence with the order present in a priest's performance of Mass. In hopes of escaping death, he seeks God in the memories of the woman who gave him life through sustenance, his wet nurse, who is recently deceased and also the person who provides him with a room when when he first comes to Havana:

> *La mano traía, al sacar la lumbre, un fuego venido de lo muy remoto, fuego anterior a la materia que por el fuego se consumía y modificaba—materia que sólo sería una posibilidad de fuego, sin una mano que la encendiera—. Pero si ese fuego presente era una finalidad en sí, necesitaba de una acción ulterior para alcanzarla. Y esa acción, de otra y de otras anteriores, que no podían derivar sino de una Voluntad Inicial. Era menester que hubiera un origen, un punto de partida, una capitular del fuego que, a través de las eras sin cuento, había iluminado las caras de los hombres. Y ese Primer Fuego no podía haberse encendido a sí mismo… Creyó vislumbrar, en todo, una parecida sucesión, un ineludible proceso de recibir energías de otra cosa; el mismo remontarse*

de los actos que, sin embargo, no podía ser infinito. Los hilos tenían que ir a parar, por fuerza, a la mano de un Propulsor primero, causa inicial de todo, detenido en la eternidad y dotado de la Suprema Eficiencia.[30] / Her hand, as it raised the light, carried a fire that came from very far away, a fire that existed before the matter it would consume and change—matter that was merely the possibility of fire until a hand set it on fire. But if that present fire was an end in itself, a prior action was necessary to attain it. And that action required another, and others before it, which could only derive from an Initial Will. There had to be an origin, a point of departure, a capitular of fire which, through countless eras, had illuminated men's faces. And that First Fire could not have set itself ablaze independently… He thought he could see in everything a similar succession, an ineluctable process whereby one thing received energy from other things; nevertheless, that sequence of acts could not be infinite. The strings had to end up, perforce, in the hand of a Prime Mover, the initial cause of everything, stock-still in eternity and endowed with Supreme Efficacy.[31]

El acosado's urgency to understand the world as an extension of why the world of his ideals has betrayed him confronts another misreading, the

[30] Carpentier, *El acoso*, pp. 59-60
[31] Carpentier, The Chase, pp. 52-53

belief that uncovering such knowledge will somehow save his life. He now chooses to believe that God sits at the point of origination and even though earlier in the novel, a priest casts him out of the church where he sought refuge, the priest's suggestion of "*Mañana. Ven a confersarte mañana.… 'mañana, mañana, mañana*'[32] / Tomorrow. Come to confession tomorrow.… 'tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow,"[33] comforts him with the idea that he will survive the night. Yet the Macbethian repetition of "tomorrow" suggests in the most poetic of images that the sound emanating from the stage and the fury of violence that chases him are about to coalesce upon his body. By ignoring how in(di)visibility gives form to the the world around him, *el acosado* cannot discern between Invisibility and Anonymity and as such he is unaware that that world of the narrative renders becoming visible as synonymous with death, a reality given physical and visual consequences when he attends his wet nurse's funeral:

> *"Lo acompaño en su sentimiento", dijeron algunos, que si un blanco estaba en velorio de negros, vestido de azul marino por tal calor, era porque algún parentesco ancilar lo ligaba a la finada. Se miró por encima del ataúd, en el espejo de la consola. Su rostro, estaba tan adelgazado, tan librado de las grasas que en él hubiera espesado el constante beber de los días sin faena, cuando trataba de olvidarse de la faena*

[32] Carpentier, *El acoso*, p. 106
[33] Carpentier, The Chase, p. 105

> *cumplida, que se sintió envalentonado por el disfraz hallado en su propia persona. Se miraba y remiraba, sin verse semejante a sí mismo.*[34] / "Please accept my deepest sympathy," someone said, thinking that if a white man was attending a wake for a black, dressed in a dark-blue suit despite the heat, it was because some distant family relationship linked him to the deceased. He looked at himself over the top of the coffin in the mirror above the console table. His face was so emaciated, so free of fat that had accumulated in it from heavy drinking over the course of those days when he had no work and was trying to forget the work he'd done, that he felt emboldened by the disguise he'd discovered in his own body. He looked at himself and looked again without finding he resembled himself.[35]

Here, the text converges all its instances of difference—racial, social, and anatomical—in a moment of recognizing that which is only a trace of what once was. *El acosado* attends the funeral for his wet nurse wearing the fine suit his father made for him when he first left for Havana. The suit is now so worn that it is on the verge of becoming a rag, yet his own body is so decrepit that it overshadows the withered state of the suit *el acosado* prizes so dearly. In essence, his own condition of persecution has taken a toll on his physical characteristics; his error, however, stems

[34] Carpentier, *El acoso*, pp. 67-68
[35] Carpentier, *The Chase*, pp. 61-62

from misreading his new position as one of Invisibility. *El acosado* ignores several social realities in misreading his current situation; not only does his presence as the only white man at a black woman's funeral single him out as the most visible of the attendees but his appearance of dereliction means that his own physical body resembles the bodies of those who, health wise, suffer from a greater risk of dying, he literally becoming death. More importantly, however, *el acosado* is unaware that he now carries all the physical markers of a man who would never be able to afford a ticket to a theater and will undoubtedly stand out in the crowd where he has chosen to hide. *El acosado's* demise is linked to the reality that all of the things that he believes grant him Invisibility are corrupted by the social realities that the text is grappling with, making him oblivious to the fact because such things are already in play, they make him the only thing that can *be* visible in the world of the narrative.

The Move Towards Anonymity in *Los Pasos Perdidos*

Los pasos perdidos continues Carpentier's exploration of the consequences inherent to the conflating of Invisibility and Anonymity. Whereas *El acoso* depicts two protagonists, one who understands how to deploy Invisibility and one whose failure to recognize that his actions have made him subject to the Anonymity that facilitates his death, *Los pasos perdidos* gives the reader a sole unnamed narrator who relinquishes the life he believes to desire by succumbing to the mirage of

Anonymity. In other words, Invisible Man and the ticket seller both come to deploy Invisibility as resistance, while *el acosado* and the narrator in *Los pasos perdidos* are rendered Anonymous as a consequence of their inability to discern the difference between the two. The two protagonists who remain anonymous, however, do so for different reasons. As discussed earlier, *el acosado* misinterprets his Anonymity for Invisibility and therefore, does not see how his actions are increasing his "visibility," resulting in his inevitable capture and death. The narrator in *Los pasos perdidos* commits the inverse error: he misreads his newfound Invisibility as having rendered him Anonymous. By taking actions he believes necessary to making his presence permanent, we will see how the narrator forgoes his Invisibility and his reaction to realizing he had done so suggests that the narrator will never fulfill his own act of recovery.

Carpentier's novel opens on a theater stage whose styling echoes that of the American South where the narrator tells us his wife is the lead actor in an unnamed Civil War drama whose initial success had brought it under the control of larger business venture. The actors are all locked into contracts that are renewable, indefinitely. By focusing on his spouse's contractual trap even though she is by definition successful in her career, the narrators posits the perspective that their professional and financial successes—he is a famous music composer for film—have somehow trapped them in a way similar to other social expectations. The narrator begins his journey of turning against such societal pressures by

alluding to a regret for abandoning his academic pursuit of music in favor of the prestige and financial security of the film world.

The narrator has thus far fulfilled his desire to escape his everyday reality by the uncreative means of taking a mistress. Moreover, a proposition he receives from his former academic advisor in graduate school that same evening makes the seriousness of this affair more interesting. Too old to make a research trip abroad himself, the narrator's former mentor contacts him in order to propose that he go in his stead on a journey into an unnamed jungle[36] in search of a particular group of ancient instruments. In turning to a former student who abandoned his own academic pursuits, the aged academic provides an opportunity for redemption. The narrator's unfinished academic work, focused on the origins of music, reaffirming the narrator's persistant desire for recovery. It is the pursuit of that recovery at the behest of his professor that allows him to once again seek out the redemptive act:

> *Inconforme con las ideas generalmente sustentadas acerca del origen de la música yo había empezado a elaborar una ingeniosa teoría que explicaba el nacimiento de la expresión rítmica primordial por el afán de remedar el paso de los animales o el canto de las aves.*[37] / Disagreeing with the

[36] Although an author's note along with the presence of revolutionary forces in the novel suggest that the location of the journey is Venezuela, there is no direct textual mentioning of the event's geographical location. This, of course, adds to the desire to understand how things that are unnamed function within the worlds that Carpentier creates.

[37] Alejo Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos*, Lectorum 2002, Third Printing 2010. p. 32. All citations in Spanish are from the Lectorum edition.

> accepted ideas on the origins of music, I had begun to elaborate an ingenious theory that explained the beginnings of primitive rhythmic expression as an attempt to imitate the movement of animals or the songs of birds.[38]

In the later parts of the novel, we come to learn through the narrator's own realization that his theory of musical origins from his graduate studies is false. However, it is apparent that in this point in the narrative by virtue of his self-declared "ingenuity," he still holds certain preconceptions in terms of cultural hierarchies. By believing that the origins of music might stem from the mimicry of animals, perhaps with the desire to gain camouflage while hunting, the narrator presupposes that there can be no form of artistic expression in primitive man. In presenting this idea as viable, the narrator fails to see how even though he desires to reject an unfulfilled life, his own thought is nevertheless informed by the that which he wants to reject. We will see later how encountering the origins of music personally, both leads him towards Invisibility, while planting the seeds of his unraveling towards Anonymity.

Although he initially rejects the possibility of taking on the Professor's project, he changes his mind when his mistress Mouche spontaneously decides to join him. Thus, Mouche becomes the hinge upon which the narrator's move towards Invisibility occurs. Moreover,

[38] Alejo Carpentier, *The Lost Steps*, 1956, Translated by Harriet de Onís, Knopf, Fifth Printing 1976, p. 20. All citations translated from the Spanish are taken from the Knopf edition.

Mouche publicly announces the trip to her friends during a private screening of the protagonist's most recent film, leaving the narrator with the decision of accepting her companionship on the trip or publicly upsetting her. Nevertheless, the professor is the one who remains the catalyst for his journey as is evident by the narrator's reflection marking the moment where his mentor convinces him to search for that which the narrator has no desire to see:

> *Entre el Yo presente y el Yo que hubiera aspirado a ser algún día se ahondaba en tinieblas el foso de los años perdidos. Parecía ahora que yo estuviera callado y el juez siguiera hablando por mi boca.*[39] *En un solo cuerpo convivíamos, él y yo, sostenidos por una arquitectura oculta que era ya, en vida nuestra, en carne nuestra, presencia de nuestra muerte.*[40] /
> Between the I that I was and the I that I might have been the dark abyss of the lost years gaped. We lived together in one body, he and I, upheld by a secret architecture that was already—in our life, in our flesh—the presence of our death.[41]

Here, the narrator recognizes the possibility that who he was, is, and could be are only differing modes of conceptual being that occur within the same body, infinite possibilities existing all at once and joined only

[39] The translator choses not to translate the sentence in the Spanish quotation that begins with *Parecia* and ends with *boca*. If it were translated, it would read as follows: "It appears as if I remained silent while the judge continued to speak from my lips."
[40] Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos*, p. 34
[41] Carpentier, *The Lost Steps*, p. 22

by the final act in that sequence, death. Such reflection clues the reader as to the root of the narrator's sense of loss. Because his conceptual struggle exists between his current self and the version of his current self that he could have aspired to, the duality exists entirely in his present. The image in the narrator's mind is not the memory of a younger self expressing remorse for the path not taken, but the Invisible self calling the narrator to action and waking him from his Anonymous state.

While Mouche and the old professor play a role in initiating these realizations, language is what allows for the possibility of fulfilling them. Upon leaving the United States, the narrator describes his first observation: the rediscovery of language:

> *Pero ahora, una rara voluptuosidad adormece mis escrúpulos. Y una fuerza me penetra lentamente por los oídos, por los poros; el idioma. He aquí, pues, el idioma que hablé en mi infancia: el idioma en que aprendí a leer y a solfear; el idioma enmohecido en mi mente por el poco uso, dejado de lado como herramienta inútil, en país donde de poco pudiera servirme.*[42]
>
> / Now a strange voluptuousness was lulling my scruples. And a force was slowly invading me through my ears, my pores: the language. Here once more was the language I had talked in my infancy; the language in which I had learned to read and sol-fa; the language that had grown rusty with

[42] Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos,* p. 49

> disuse, thrown aside like a useless instrument in a country where it was of no value to me.[43]

Hearing Spanish used as the primary language for communicating has an uncanny effect on the narrator: his mother tongue foreign to the nation of his dwelling and therefore rendered foreign to him by its lack of use now returns by process of immersion. In fact, there are several shifts concerning the state of foreignness in the narrator's observation that reaffirm his in-between state. Physically speaking, the narrator has literally traveled from one space to another—from the United States to South America. Yet, what makes that movement "real" to the narrator is the shift in spoken langauge of the journey. Spanish permeates this new space, a language the narrator speaks, and therefore, allows for a kind of belonging despite being a foreigner. Even though the narrator characterizes Spanish as the language of his "infancy," it is also the language in which he "learned to read and sol-fa." The narrator recognizes Spanish as his gateway into literacy in the contexts of literature and music. Moreover, when the narrator once again hears the language of his infancy, it conjures images of voluptuousness and penetration. The sexualization of this listening experience marks this as a moment of conception. In fact, the wordplay of "*enmohecido*" creates an image of submersion, casting the event as a womb-like experience that foreshadows the re-birth of the narrator. These images, however, do not

[43] Carpentier, *The Lost Steps*, p. 41

portray maternity alone, but are also a way to mark nature and one's environment as parallels for the evolution of consciousness in which the narrator engages.

The trip eventually reaches the point where the narrator and Mouche must take a local bus that will scale mountain terrain so they can reach their next stop. Along the way, they pick up Rosario, a woman on the side of the road who is having trouble breathing due to the rigors of her own journey compounded by the altitude. The narrator's first description of Rosario is clinical in its beauty and alludes to the evolutionairy process:

> *El perfil era de un dibujo muy puro, desde la frente a la nariz; pero, inesperadamente, bajo los rasgos impasibles y orgullosos, la boca se hacía espesa y sensual, alcanzando una mejilla delgada, en fuga hacia la oreja, que acusaba en fuertes valores el modelado de aquel rostro enmarcado por una pesada cabellera negra, recogida, aquí y allá, por peinetas de celuloide. Era evidente que varias razas se encontraban mezcladas en esa mujer, india por el pelo y los pómulos, mediterránea por la frente y la nariz, negra por la sólida redondez de los hombros y una peculiar anchura de la cadera, que acaba de advertir al verla levantarse para poner el hato de ropa y el paraguas en la rejilla de los equipajes.*[44] / It was a

[44] Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos*, p. 82

> pure profile from brow to nose, but suddenly, below these proud, impassive features, the mouth turned full and sensual, with lean cheeks rising toward the ear, the strongly modeled lineaments set in a frame of thick black hair held, here and there, by celluloid combs. Several races had met in this woman: Indian in the hair and cheekbones, Mediterranean in brow and nose, Negro in the heavy shoulders and the breadth of hips I had noticed as she stood up to put her bundle and umbrella in the luggage rack.[45]

The profile view bestows Rosario with a sense of artistic beauty reminiscent of Renaissance marriage portraits. The subtle allusion to the Renaissance foreshadows the process of re-birth that this journey initiates for the narrator. Although the narrator notes the racial mixing that produced Rosario, he recognizes the presence of these various races and ethnicities through physical markers that are distinct from his own. From this perspective, then, the narrator's observations although astute, ignore the white European conquests that allowed for such mixing to manifest itself in Rosario. Also, by not commenting on her complexion or skin color, the narrator fails to acknowledge the possibility of a white European presence in Rosario, a rejection of any of the things that form him, the narrator, existing in her.

[45] Carpentier, *The Lost Steps*, p. 81

Moreover, his categories of "race"—Indian, Mediterranean, Negro—also establish a regionalization that privileges general physical characteristics as primary markers of identity that in this moment of wonder renders Rosario a multiplicity as opposed to a singular individual, a king of dehumanizing from her treatment as a specimen. This carries over to when the narrator's description then takes on a socioeconomic tone:

> *No estaba bien vestida ni mal vestida. Estaba vestida fuera de la época, fuera del tiempo, con aquella intrincada combinación de calados, fruncidos y cintas, en crudo y azul, todo muy limpio y almidonado, tieso como baraja, con algo de costurero romántico y de arca de prestidigitador.*[46] / She was neither well nor badly dressed. Her attire was of no period, no time, with its fussiness of drawnwork, gathers, ribbons, in tan and blue, all clean and starched, as stiff as a deck of cards, something out of an old-fashioned sewing-box and a lightning-change artist's trunk.[47]

Here, the narrator now finds it difficult to elaborate other details of Rosario's appearance. Whereas her biological characteristics are a manifestation of diverse histories, the aspects of Rosario's appearance that she can control, such as her clothing and demeanor, are part of her individuality and to not indebted to constructs of place. Such

[46] Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos*, p. 83
[47] Carpentier, *The Lost Steps*, p. 83

discrepancy between her physical characteristics and the other aspects of her appearance grants Rosario an Invisibility that seeds the intrigue the narrator begins to exhibit towards her. Rosario sets the note to which the narrator begins to tune his own conceptualizations. Rosario's Invisibility allows her a degree of fluidity through which she gains access to various communities at several points throughout the novel. Like the "lightning-change artist," Rosario enters into spaces from the position of an outsider, yet that position never classifies the spaces she comes to occupy as being foreign. This freedom of mobility comes to allow for the narrator to fall in love with Rosario and in another twist, he leaves his mistress for Rosario who he comes to view as the archetype of womanhood. The break with Mouche occurs in the early stages of traveling into the rainforest. When the bus that picks up Rosario finally reaches her hometown, the narrator learns of a man who is also unnamed in the narrative and is referred to by the townspeople as "*el adelantado*."[48] The secretive and mysterious behavior of this new unnamed character is a direct consequence of the foreigners who use that particular town as a base from which to explore the jungle in search of gold. Despite these apprehensions, *el adelantado* agrees to serve as the narrator's guide into the jungle because he has seen the instruments he is searching for. As the journey into the jungle commences, Mouche falls ill and has to return to the town, leaving Rosario and the narrator free to

[48] This nickname best translates to "the advanced/forward thinking one" and is reference to his being literate despite his social standing.

begin their relationship openly. A few days into this new leg of the journey, *el adelantado* confirms the theory whispered throughout the town that he has founded a city deep in the jungle, that he has brought his own conceptualization of civilization to a group of people who knew nothing of it. *El adelantado* continues to confess his vision to the narrator, a city with shelter, religion, a church to be built, and laws that will need enforcing. Because his now established relationship with Rosario has granted him the credibility of gaining access to such a place, the narrator decides that he will never return to the "modern" world and that he will build a life with Rosario in the town founded by his new friend.

It is Rosario's ability to adapt to the spaces she inhabits that allows her to transfer her mobility to the narrator. Nevertheless, this outsider/insider positioning of Rosario stands in stark contrast to the narrator's relational position of coming to terms with his own foreignness to the people and the world that now surrounds him. The narrator's erudition blinds him from the reality that he is positioning himself as a foreigner who is having difficulty truly seeing the world around him. By wishing himself invisible so that he can observe the world as it is happening, the narrator, like the character who is executed in *El acoso,* conflates Anonymity and Invisibility. This part of the text provides an ideal opening for the narrator to reveal his name, yet he refuses. Because there are no witnesses to the narrator's rebirth where he is created anew

through Rosario repeating his name, he will come to find himself prisoner to preconceptions of his old life, dooming the new life he claims he wants to live:

> *Hoy, por vez primera, Rosario me ha llamado por mi nombre, repitiéndolo mucho, como si sus sílabas tuvieran que tornar a ser modeladas—y mi nombre, en su boca, ha cobrado una sonoridad tan singular, tan inesperada, que me siento como ensalmado por la palabra que más conozco, al oírla tan nueva como si acabara de ser creada.*[49] / That day for the first time Rosario called me by my name, repeating it again and again, as though its syllables had to be molded anew, and in her mouth it took on a sonority so strange, so unexpected, that I was spellbound by the word I knew best when I heard it as though it had just been created.[50]

This moment functions as a semantic satiation whereby the narrator's name is now simply numb to its original identity. The consequence of the narrator posting the possibility of his name just having been created is that he comes to believe that the totality of his journey thus far is his act of redemption and therefore, the speaking of his name anew marks his rebirth into a new life. Here, the narrator becomes victim to his own ideology and sense of intellect. Even though he sees value in the way of

[49] Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos*, p. 145
[50] Carpentier, *The Lost Steps*, p. 157

life of the people with whom he is now living, his own value system is still determined by the life he lived and not the one he is living.

Upon settling down in the *el adelantado's* city, the narrator reaches a point of cognitive clarity, which inspires him to finally begin writing the master composition that has eluded him throughout his professional career. The narrator goes through several notebooks that he borrows from *el adelantado* and creates what he believes is a significant piece that contributes to the history of music. The narrator's desire to share this new work with the particular audience of the "modern world," which he claims to reject, begins his unraveling towards Anonymity. He insists that the validation of his art must be derived from outside recognition, ignoring the logical conclusion that placing such requirements on his own artistic creation contradicts his stated desire to his leave his past life behind. When referencing the ongoing development of his musical composition, the narrator states:

> *Lo hecho no acaba de estar hecho mientras otro no lo mirara. Pero bastaba que uno solo mirara para que la cosa fuera, y se hiciera creación verdadera por la mera palabra de un Adán nombrando.*[51] / What was done was not completely done until someone else had seen it. But it was enough for one

[51] Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos*, p. 211

> person to see it to bring it to being and accomplish the true act of creation, like Adam, by giving it a name.[52]

The narrator's desire to invite an outside value system to deem his artistic production worthy suggests that even if *el adelantado* gathered all the instruments necessary to have the narrator's piece performed in the middle of the jungle, doing so would not satisfy the narrator's notion of creation. By tragically misreading the distinction between Invisibility and Anonymity, the narrator abandons the genuine happiness he finds with Rosario in pursuit of recognition by the modern world. In believing that his composition's worth is dependent upon the validation of those outside the jungle, the narrator fails to recognize the significance of his work and life independent of cultural and social hierarchies. And so, by signaling to a rescue plane that was already searching for him, the narrator leaves Rosario under the guise of tying up the loose ends of his old life, promising to return to her as soon as possible.

The loose ends, however, refuse to tie themselves as neatly as the narrator hoped. Upon learning that the narrator intends to return to the jungle and live with Rosario, his wife, who pledges to recommit herself to her now returned husband promises to make the divorce a difficult and lengthy process. Because the narrator's return is so delayed, Rosario believes he is not coming back and decides to stay in *el adelantado's* city and marries his son, Marcos. The narrator learns of the marriage when

[52] Carpentier, *The Lost Steps*, p. 237

he returns to her former town to travel back into the jungle to find her. His reaction to the news shows an attempt to justify his behavior and its eventual outcome:

> *Pero nada de esto se ha destinado a mí, porque la única raza humana que está impedida a desligarse de las fechas es la raza de quienes hacen arte, y no sólo tienen que adelantarse a un ayer inmediato, representando en testimonios tangibles, sino que se anticipan al canto y forma de otros que vendrán después, creando nuevos testimonios tangibles en plena conciencia de lo hecho hasta hoy. Marcos y Rosario ignoran la historia.*[53] / But none of this was for me, because the only human race to which it is forbidden to sever the bonds of time is the race of those who create art, and who not only must move ahead of the immediate yesterday, represented by tangible witness, but must anticipate the song and the form of others who will follow them, creating new tangible witness with full awareness of what has been done up to the moment. Marcos and Rosario were ignorant of history.[54]

The narrator's unwillingness to accept the consequences of his own actions is rather jarring and while one may argue that it is inherent to the narrator's search for ephemeral pleasures, it is evident that his behavior is a product of his inability to discern between Invisibility and

[53] Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos*, p. 244
[54] Carpentier, *The Lost Steps*, p. 278

Anonymity. Because of his insistence on positions of power that determine cultural superiority, the narrator fools himself into believing that his losing Rosario was the better alternative. By casting himself as an artist who seeks to serve time's race against history, and Marcos and Rosario as being ignorant of its value, the narrator reduces the role of the artist and the value he saw in the type of life he sought to live to insignificance. And yet, the narrator believes this categorization sets him on a noble path. However, by believing that any artistic contribution to humanity is predicated on the ability to abandon it, the narrator fails to see how the Invisibility of Rosario and Marcos allows for resisting the passage of time and as such, stands in contrast to his own position. If the narrator is going to posit the role of the artist as that of a creator who cannot sever the bonds of time, then the narrator fails to *see* that creation, as an act of resistance, is only possible from the position of Invisibility.

Chapter 2

Revolting Machines: Mechanics of Power and Authority in *El Reino de Este Mundo*, *Écue-Yamba-Ó*, and *Invisible Man*

Introduction

This chapter explores how Carpentier's *El reino de este mundo* (1949), *Écue-Yamba-Ó* (1933), and Ellison's *Invisible Man* deploy historical memory as acts of Resistance. Each of the novels discussed stages three events in common that I argue encompass a textual agency that is distinct from the action of the text's characters. Therefore, while the previous chapter portrayed how a character's inability to distinguish between Invisibility and Anonymity results in the failure of a singular act of Resistance against a structure of Power, the goal here is to show how the text absolves itself from the successes and failures of individual characters in order to emerge as an act of Resistance unto itself. Engaging with the novels on a thematic level I will show how the novels themselves form a collective to develop, deploy, and recast Resistance as a political act that hinges on the in(di)visibility of Power and Authority. The sustainability of Resistance depends on its ability to shape the event, not by changing or undermining the experience of events in the novels

the way that revolution, revolt, or dissent might, but by exerting an influence as formative as Power exercises upon a citizenry.

The first section discusses industry as a site of physical trauma in order to show how the trauma that industrial production inflicts upon the body is a manifestation of the "will to power" inherent to the machinery of the factory itself. In the opening scenes of *El reino de este mundo*, Mackandal, one of the novel's main protagonists, gets his arm caught in the gears of the mill's centrifuge and his arm is disfigured so badly that it requires amputation. *Écue-Yamba-Ó* carries on Carpentier's early introduction of the factory with the opening sequence of the novel, which portrays the sugar mill as an organism bestowed with desires and a will whose appeasement is predicated on challenging the human conceptualization of time. In *Invisible Man*, the narrator takes a job at the Liberty Paint plant and when he commits an error mixing a batch of the factory's trademark "optic white," he is sent to the fire, machinery, and gauges of the furnace room where a subsequent altercation leads to the machinery exploding. When taking these three events together, it becomes apparent that the recovery of the historical trauma of forced labor is not a project of memory, but one of Resistance. I argue that for Carpentier and Ellison, Resistance is not an act of enduring in the passive sense but rather, it is an act of subversion from which a new form of collective power that can emerge starting with the individual and challenge the systemic power of industry. Therefore, the act of recovery

as Resistance insists upon a sustained distinction between recovery as a preservative act of historical memory and recovery for the purpose of recasting the trauma from a position of dissidence in order to undermine systems of power.

The second section analyzes how Carpentier and Ellison deploy the male gaze in order to subvert gendered and racial formulations of Power. The scenes discussed in this section show how the act of writing itself persists as an act of Resistance. All three novels include a scene of a sustained male gaze on a female body as a means of underpinning the role of desire in gendered and racial norms. The nuanced similarities in the ways Carpentier and Ellison each handle these interrogations of desire acknowledge further the role of the in(di)visible in renegotiating binary comparisons by taking the assumed Powr structure and inverting it. In *Écue-Yamba-Ó*, revulsion as a byproduct of desire destabilized by the role of language and its relationship to identity as expressed in the first interaction between the main character Menegildo and his love interest, Longina. Carpentier revisits the role of male desire as it is subjugated to the dictating norms of difference in social class in *El reino de este mundo* when the portrayal of Pauline Bonaparte as an object of desire, historically speaking, complicates literary representations of double consciousness. As such, when interrogating the ways in which Ellison presents objectification of the gaze as a totality predicated on gendered and racial constructs in the Battle Royal scene of *Invisible Man*,

it becomes apparent that Carpentier and Ellison are invested in redefining the spaces in which acts of Resistance emerge.

The third section examines how these novels portray acts of sporadic violence in terms that deconstruct their validity as acts of Resistance. Because each novel employs individual acts of group violence near the narrative conclusion, an analysis of the circumstances that lead up to each particular eruption of violence as a means towards resolution elucidates how violence lifts the veil that blurs the distinction between Power and Authority. In *El reino de este mundo*, the violent revolt that takes control of Henri Christope's Sans Souci palace and thus, creates the circumstances for his suicide in the text, serves as a counterpoint for the machine on human violence that takes Mackandal's arm in the novel's opening sequences. The coordinated effort in which Ti Noel is one of the leaders, presents itself as a spontaneous revolt in the text and as such, the re-appropriation of the land at the hands of the surveyors at the novel's conclusion casts the act of violence futile in the sense that it does not result in a transfer of power to the oppressed. Violence finds a similar treatment by Carpentier in his first novel *Écue-Yamba-Ó* when the inter-gang violence of urban Havana culminates in the stabbing and killing of its main protagonist Mengildo Cué near the ending of the text and is immediately followed by a brief epilogue that presents the reader with his namesake son. The cyclical nature of violence and social positions is amplified when placed against the backdrop of birth and

rebirth that frames the novel's narrative arc. Furthermore, Ellison takes a similar approach in his characterization of violence given that the climactic riot scene of Invisible *Man* is foreshadowed by positing the ambiguity of Invisible Man's passing for Rinehart as an act of de-humanization that serves as a precursor for the eruption of violence. That same violence is what drives the narrator into the isolated state that the reader finds him in at the novel's beginning and echoes the cyclical nature of the violent act. Such representations close out the theme of violence as futile permeating through the three novels.

The Recognition of Will in Labor and Production

In *Écue-Yamba-Ó*, Carpentier juxtaposes the factory and the laboring human body in order to show how the systemic nature of sugar production imbues the mechanics of the factory with an agency that imposes itself as a manifestation of will. Although the novel itself focuses on the life of Menegildo Cué given that it begins with his own birth and ends with the birth of his namesake son, the text captures the story of the men in his family as far back as his own grandfather. By focusing on the aftermath of an affair between lovers gone awry, the novel recounts how circumstance removes Menegildo from the rural life on his family's farm to the hustle of life in Havana through traditional literary conventions. This approach to the literary convention, however, is always from a destabilizing position of Resistance. As Roberto González

Echevarría states: "[*Écue-Yamba-Ó*] was written at the height of the crisis of the European novel, when all of these conventions and rhetorical devices had come to be questioned."[55] As such, when taking into account how Carpentier comes to reject surrealism and other European influences, *Écue-Yamba-Ó* is not a novel in the fashion of conventional tropes, but rather, an exercise in how the conventions themselves expose their own limitations. At the source of the marvelous real is the ability to transcend belief.

In a way, however, the novel is Cuba itself—its rural landscape, urban life, tempestuous weather—and as the main constant throughout the novel, the text itself is a recovery of Cuba's history. Therefore, Carpentier's literary exploration emphasizes breadth to destabilize a singular representation of Cuba. This is apparent in the opening scenes of *Écue-Yamba-Ó* that focus on the landscape by portraying life on a sugar mill in the days leading up to the beginning of the harvest season. The harvest is depicted as a collective organism that breathes life into and sustains the production process of agriculture. As such, the sugar cane itself is characterized as having an intimate relationship with its human caretakers as expressed when we first meet Usebio Cué, the father of the novel's main protagonist, Menegildo:

> Para él la caña no encerraba el menor misterio. Apenas asomaba entre los cuajarones de tierra negra, se seguía su

[55] González Echevarría, p. 66

> desarrollo sin sorpresas. El saludo de la primera hoja; el saludo de la segunda hoja.[56] / For him, the sugar cane did not hold the smallest of mysteries. Barely appearing through the thickened black earth, it would continue to grow without surprises. The greeting of the first leaf; the greeting of the second leaf.[57]

Usebio's familiarity with the sugar cane is grounded in their shared relationship to the land itself. The conceptualization of the root as a beginning is supplanted by the soil as the shared origin between the living man and the breathing plant. This shared origin leads to the shared experience of exploitation given that both the land and the body succumb to the will of if the Island's sugar production. Furthermore, because Usebio is no longer surprised by the soil's secrets, he gains the knowledge that allows him to see the growth and evolution of the crop in instantaneous time. For Usebio, the stalk breaking the soil conjures the images of the first and second leaves, setting off a representation that anticipates the entire system of sugar production from beginning to end. In this context, the sugar mill itself is not a process but rather, a collective totality in the present that represents the embodiment of a will possessing the ability to impose itself. Regardless of what Usebio does, the leaves will continue coming, one after the other. It is only in his

[56] Alejo Carpentier, *Écue-Yamba-Ó*, p. 15
[57] Translation Mine

anticipation that his observation moves beyond a passive onlooking and becomes a battle of wills between the crop and the farmer.

Moreover, the personified descriptors of the means of production that occur later in the same passage illustrate this line of thought more clearly: "*….chimeneas y sirenas ejercían, en tiempos de zafra, una tiránica dictadura.*"[58] / ….chimneys and bell tolls exerted, during times of harvest, a tyrannical dictatorship."[59] In this context, the use of "dictatorship" relates specifically to markers of time meant to control one's conception of its passing, an abstract concept bestowed on nature with a characterization of human power. This representation ties in ideas of memory when the text goes on to say, "*Todavía existía en alguna parte, solitaria y hendida, la campana que había servido antaño para llamar a los esclavos.*"[60] / There still exists in some place, alone and cracked, the bell that had once served to call on the slaves."[61] Like the bodies given up to the sugar mill, the cast metal that sounds time's passing exists as a physical manifestation of memory in the sense that the narrator tells the reader that the remains of the bell lie "alone and cracked" somewhere on the plantation. Yet, the bell also forms a representation of memory given that it's exact location is unknown and although the possibility of recalling exists, it must first be located before being brought forth. This sense of memory as every place expressed here through the memory of

[58] *Écue-Yamba-Ó*, p. 16
[59] Translation Mine
[60] *Écue-Yamba-Ó*, p. 17
[61] Translation Mine

physical objects, emphasizes the role of time in the Power/Authority relationship as presented in the novel through the wills of labor and production.

The condition of memory as omnipresent takes on a geographic diversity when the migrant workers arrive for the harvest:

> *Entonces comenzaba la invasión. Tropeles de obreros. Capataces de americanos mascando tabaco. El químico francés que maldecía cotidianamente al cocinero de la fonda. El pesador italiano, que comía guindillas con pan y aceite. El inevitable viajante judío, enviado por una casa de maquinaria yanqui.*[62] / And then began the invasion. Hordes of laborers. American overseers chewing tobacco. The French chemist who cursed the tavern cook daily. The Italian butcher who ate chili peppers with bread and oil. The inevitable wandering Jew sent by a yankee equipment company.[63]

Characterizing the arrival of foreign laborers as an "invasion" recasts the memory of colonization as a means of elucidating the systemic consequences of historical trauma. Industrialization in the text does not focus solely on the production of the commodity, but also accounts for the infrastructure that supports the means of production. When acknowledging the labor that maintains the machinery, the labor working the machines themselves, and those who feed the working

[62] *Écue-Yamba-Ó*, p.18
[63] Translation Mine

bodies alongside those who offer their bodies as labor, the reader gathers a contextualized representation of industry as a self-reinforcing phenomenon, an organism whose hierarchies of wills within the system of production all bend towards the power of the system of production itself. In fact, it is from this very infrastructure that the will of the sugar mill emerges:

> *La disciplina se hace sentir en medio del desorden. El ambiente se empapa de una preocupación. La luz, los árboles, las bestias, parecen aguardar algo. La brisa se deja escuchar por última vez en los alrededores de la fábrica. Se espera….Entonces rompe la zafra.*[64] / Among the disorder, discipline makes itself felt. The atmosphere drenched with worry. Light, trees, beasts, all seem to wait for something. The breeze lets itself be heard one final time throughout the plant. They wait…. and then the harvest breaks out.[65]

It is not discipline in the abstract that is felt, but rather, the discipline imposed by conditions of labor. In this case, the looming commencement of the harvest causes nature itself to pause and then retreat as the sugar mill roars to life:

> *La fábrica ronca, fuma, estertor, chifla. La vida se organiza de acuerdo con sus voluntades. Cada seis horas se le envían centenares de hombres. Ella los devuelve extenuados,*

[64] *Écue-Yamba-Ó*, p.20
[65] Translation Mine

> *pringosos, jadeantes. Por las noches arden en la oscuridad como un transatlántico incendiado. Nadie contraría sus caprichos. Todos los relojes se ponen de acuerdo cuando suenan sus toques de sirena.…Y esto dura meses.*[66] / The plant roars, smokes, rattles, whistles. Life organizes itself according to its will. Every six hours she is sent hundreds of men. She returns them exhausted, greasy, panting. At night they burn in the darkness like a transatlantic fire. No one opposes her whims. All the clocks are set in synch with her bell tolls…. And this goes on for months.[67]

Here, the representation of the mill itself goes beyond personification and takes on a mechanized animality epitomized by the cyclical intake and expulsion of labor. Again, time is expressed through a frequency, and "six hours" marks the temporal passage in parallel to the physical markers of labor—exhaustion, grime, belabored breathing—in order to portray the hierarchies of will, which the mill's desire dominates. In fact, the "whims" are so dominant that they overrule standardized clock time-keeping in favor of antiquated bell tolls. The historical association of bell towers as calls to worship, alludes to the idolatry of capital in the novel:

> *A medida que subía el azúcar, a medida que sus cifras iban creciendo en las pizarras de Wall Street, las tierras adquiridas por el ingenio formaban una mancha mayor en el mapa de la*

[66] *Écue-Yamba-Ó*, p. 21
[67] Translation Mine

> *provincia. Una serie de pequeños cultivadores se habían dejado convencer por las ofertas tentadoras de la compañía americana, cediendo heredades cuyos títulos de propiedad se remontaban a más de un siglo.*[68] / In proportion to the rising price of sugar, measured by its rising figures on the boards of Wall Street, the lands acquired by the sugar factory formed a major spot on the map of the province. A series of small farmers had allowed themselves to be convinced by the tempting offers made by the American company, ceding lands whose deeds date back more than a century.[69]

This recasting of colonialism in financial terms places Wall Street profits at the center of the economic forces that drive the acquisition of domestic assets by a foreign will's desire for the accumulation of resources. As such, the selling of Cuban farmland to US companies exposes the Power of perception over reality whereby the possibility of a better future unfolding in the immediate present casts aside the concrete reality of progress. The importance of centrality to such perceptions becomes clear when looking closely at the role of language in describing aspects of agricultural production in cultural-specific terms. In Cuba, *el central* is the term generally associated with the sugar processing mill and while it serves as a reference to the centrifuge used in sugar production, it is nevertheless symbolic of the historical importance of sugar to the

[68] *Écue-Yamba-Ó*, p. 30
[69] Translation Mine

economic viability of the Island. *Écue-Yamba-Ó* opts for using the word "*ingenio,*" which functions in tandem with the notion of *el central* while at the same time, being the term more generally associated with the sugar factory in the Spanish lexicon of Latin America. *Ingenio*, however, also depicts ingenuity or wit and as such, underscores the inherent deception that grounds the means of sugar production that manipulated the market in ways that forced the small farmers to commodify a century of ancestral ownership of one's land. This deception echoes the linguistic double-dealing that occurs in the use of *central* for its allusion to both the factory and the sugar industry as a whole. We will come to see how Menegildo plays into this representation in the second and third sections of this chapter, but as it stands, Cuba is undoubtedly cast as the canvas on which this story is drafted and also suffering from the exploitation of sugar production. Therefore, it is in developing the will of Cuba alongside the will of Menegildo that Carpentier begins to distinguish between the will of the characters and the will of the text in what will allow even his failed protagonists to exist within the Resistance of the text. In this regard, *Écue-Yamba-Ó* is a text concerned with origins, not only in the sense of where things come from but also, where they might begin. Such a notion is echoed in Leonardo Padura's thinking when he writes, "*en la novela* Écue-Yamba-Ó *la visión del mundo fabuloso de los negros pasa a través de la pupils culta de un narrador, generalmente empeñado en*

establecer claramente el origen de estas nociones mágicas[70] / in the novel *Écue-Yamba-Ó* the vision of the marvelous black world passes through the pupils of a learned narrator, who is determined in establishing clearly the origins of these notions of magic."[71] Here, the origin that concerns the narrator, as Padura explains it, is the point that identifies a source. It is in finding the source that one locates the Power of magic[72] and because we are making our way backwards towards the source, beginning with the text, the point of departure is interrogating the magic of Power.

Since we are concerned here with how the text develops a position of Resistance that is separate although not necessarily different from its characters, we will now look at Carpentier's *El reino de este mundo* in order to understand how two distinct wills converge upon a position of Resistance. This text posits Mackandal, an old slave who becomes a symbol of Resistance and inspires the revolt that leads to the Haitian Revolution, in contrast to Ti Noël, his protege of sorts and key figure in the subsequent revolt against the regime of Henri Christope. Although initially presented as counterpoints given their mentor/mentee relationship, over the course of the novel, the convergence of their positions of Resistance brings the agency of the text into perspective and exposes how it will come to challenge the foundation of Power. Because

[70] Leonardo Padura Fuentes, *Un camino de medio siglo: Alejo Carpentier y la narrativa de lo real maravilloso*, (Tierra Firme, Mexico, 2002) p. 239
[71] Translation Mine
[72] References to "magic" deal with representations of the "marvelous real" as is set forth most clearly by Carpentier in his prologue to "*El reino de este mundo*."

the novel is crowded with historical figures and we as readers enter this world primarily through Ti Noël's eyes, our perspective is already a social and cultural critique that explores how, more often than not, Power fools those who think they possess it. We first see this in the relationship of Ti Noël and his master when they are at the market in order to purchase a horse. Ti Noël's knowledge of horses grants him a position of relative access since he is the one chosen to travel with his master to market and his master relies on his opinion when choosing to purchase a given animal:

> *Monsieur Lenormand de Mezy, conocedor de la pericia del esclavo en la materia de caballos, sin reconsiderar el fallo, había pagado en sonantes luises…Siguiendo el amo que jineteaba un alazán de patas más livianas.*[73] / M. Lenormand de Mézy, who knew the slave's gift for judging horse flesh, had paid the price in ringing louis d'or without questioning his choice…Following his master, who was riding a lighter-limbed sorrel.[74]

This transfer of property that occurs in the opening scene of the novel grounds the tension between Power and Authority that characterizes the narrative arc of the text. Although both Ti Noël and now the horse are the legal property of Lenormand de Mezy, in this instance

[73] Alejo Carpentier, *El reino de este mundo*, (Alianza Editorial, Biblioteca Carpentier, Cuarta reimpression, 2007) p. 19
[74] Alejo Carpentier, The Kingdom of this World, Translated by Harriet de Onís, (Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, New York, 2006) p. 3

within the world of the novel, the Authority that he wields over these living things by virtue of transactional possession is always validated by some form of Power. In the instance of the horse, de Mezy succumbs to the power of Ti Noël's knowledge on the subject of horses by not questioning the choice. The use of "*fallo*" to describe Ti Noël's decision is peculiar because the word has contradictory meanings contingent upon whether or not the decision it describes occurs within a system of Power. A *fallo* within a judicial system decreed by a judge is a verdict or ruling; however, when it is taken out of the systemic context and used in a quotidian sense, it refers to a mistake or error. Furthermore, the depiction of the master's horse as smaller than the one the slave is handling aptly debunks the possibility that such Power is simply Ti Noël as a proxy with de Mezy as the source. In this context, not only does Ti Noël sit higher than his master when he is mounted on the horse, he also possesses better skill in the upper class practice of horse riding.

Moreover, describing the horse as "*alazán*/sorrel" brings its chestnut coloring to the forefront in a way that darkens the representation of the master's social position in racial terms. This further magnifies the tension inherent to the Power/Authority relationship portrayed in this passage given that de Mezy's own social position helps to maintain Ti Noël's knowledge of livestock in addition to his physical labor. Thus, by portraying the master/slave relationship through a lens

that privileges the position of the slave, the text subverts how the reader conceives of hegemonic structures of control.

When looking at Mackandal, on the other hand, it is apparent that he assumes a position of Power in his relationship with Ti Noël through his role as mentor, which allows for a significant degree of influence. Mackandal's knowledge of the world, presented in the text as an ongoing and never-ending process of reconfiguring the self, holds in check the Authority that Ti Noël derives from his proximity to his master's affairs. Although the task of feeding sugar cane into the centrifuge for processing renders his movements to "….*un paso que el hábito hacía absolutamente regular*[75] /….a pace that habit had made mechanical,"[76] Mackandal still possesses his mind. Although the mechanics of plantation labor took over the muscle memory of his body long ago, his ability to disseminate knowledge is still intact. The ways in which the quotidian routine severs the ties between the body and mind takes on a literal representation when Mackandal's arm is caught in the gears of the centrifuge's feeder:

> *En la paila del guarapo se ensanchaba un ojo de sangre. Asiendo un cuchillo, Ti Noel cortó las correas que sujetaban el mástil del trapiche…Comenzaron a apretarle un torniquete de cuerdas en la axila, para contener la hemorragia. El amo ordenó que trajera la piedra de amolar, para dar filo al*

[75] *El reino de este mundo*, p. 26
[76] The Kingdom of this World, p. 13

> *machete que se utilizaría en la amputación.*[77] / An eye of blood began to widen in the pan catching the juice. Grabbing a knife, Ti Noël cut the traces that fastened the horse to the shaft of the mill…They began to tie a tourniquet under his armpit to stop the bleeding. The master called for a whetstone to sharpen the machete to be used for amputation.[78]

Here, two actions work in unison for the sparing of Mackandal's life: Ti Noël's knife releases the horse from the straps that tie it to the machine while Lenormand de Mezy prepares the machete to sever Mackandal's arm. The slave masters the horse and the master the slave. Each action involves an agent acting upon that which they control. This dual release of the horse and Mackandal's arm endows him with new knowledge that anchors the position of Power that he will come to assume, with the help of Ti Noël, over the course of the novel. In this regard, his amputation results in his subsequent worldly transformation: he becomes *of* the world as a consequence of being rejected *from* the societal structure that exploits him through the literal separation of his body. It is from this point on that Mackandal comes to reject the normative structures of the position into which he was born and comes to embrace the marvelous reality of the world beyond the fringes of monoculture:

[77] *El reino de este mundo*, p. 28
[78] The Kingdom of this World, p. 15

Descubría, con sorpresa, la vida secreta de especies singulares, afectas al disfraz, la confusión, el verde verde, y amigas de la pequeña gente acorazada que esquivaba los caminos de hormigas. La mano traía alpistes sin nombres, alcaparras de azufre, ajíes minúsculos, bejucos que tejían redes entre las piedras; matas solitarias, de hojas velludas, que sudaban en la noche; sensitivas que se doblaban al mero sonido de loa voz humana; cápsulas que estallaban, a mediodía, con chasquido de uñas aplastando una pulga; lianas rasteras, que se trababan, lejos del sol, en babeantes marañas.[79] / To his surprise, he discovered the secret life of strange species given to disguise, confusion, camouflage, protectors of the little armored beings that avoid the pathways of the ants. His hand gathered anonymous seeds, sulphury capers, diminutive hot peppers; vines that wove nets among the stones; solitary bushes with furry leaves that sweated at night; sensitive plants that closed at the mere sound of the human voice; pods that burst at midday with the pop of a flea cracked under the nail; creepers that plaited themselves in slimy tangles far from the sun.[80]

The amputation grants Mackandal a conscious awareness of the "secret life" existing around him. By becoming one-armed and being cast out of

[79] *El reino de este mundo*, p. 29-30
[80] The Kingdom of this World, p. 17-18

the normative societal order, he develops an affinity for nature as a singularity that protects itself through disguise. The camouflage inherent to this natural order shields him from being seen when he escapes from slavery.

Mackandal's escape, however, leaves a comprehensive void: "*La partida de Mackandal era también la partida de todo el mundo evocado por sus relatos.*[81] / The disappearance of Macandal was also the disappearance of all that world evoked by his tales."[82] The promise of the world Ti Noël learned to imagine is contingent on the presence of Mackandal. Therefore, when Mackandal begins to use Ti Noël as a proxy to bring messages to other slaves—that he is still alive and will return, that he is still alive and in nature, resisting—the possibility of his return empowers Mackandal with an omnipresence that the *marvelous real* of the novel makes literal:

> *Dotado del poder de transformarse en animal de pezuña, en ave, pez o insecto, Mackandal visitaba continuamente las haciendas de la Llanura para vigilar a sus fieles y saber si todavía confiaban en su regreso. De metamorfosis en metamorfosis, el manco estaba en todas partes, habiendo recobrado su integridad corpórea al vestir trajes de animales. Con alas un día, con agallas al otro, galopando o reptando, se había adueñado del curso de los ríos subterráneos, de las*

[81] *El reino de este mundo*, p. 33
[82] The Kingdom of this World, p. 23

> *cavernas de la costa, de las copas de los árboles, y reinaba ya sobre la isla entera.*[83] / As he had the power to take the shape of hoofed animal, bird, fish, or insect, Macandal continually visited the plantations of the Plaine to watch over his faithful and find out if they still had faith in his return. In one metamorphosis or another, the one-armed was everywhere, having recovered his corporeal integrity in animal guise. With wings one day, spurs another, galloping or crawling, he had made himself master of the courses of the underground streams, the caverns of the seacoast, and the treetops that now ruled the whole island.[84]

Although Mackandal's transformative abilities return him to a state of "corporeal integrity" when he takes on the form of animals, this totality does not make him consciously whole. His power of metamorphosis becomes a restorative search where the flux of his physical manifestations—bird, insect, horse—affirm his desire to be all of nature and not just a part of it through a particular species. From this perspective, Mackandal desires nature as a singularity existing within him so that his magical powers are not just made apparent in the act of transforming into something else, but wielded as Power in human form. Here the emphasis is on the ability of *being* something else without *becoming* whatever the other might be in a gesture that allows for a

[83] *El reino de este mundo*, p. 43
[84] The Kingdom of this World, p. 35-36

mutual recognition that affirms the human capacity for change in the transformative sense of societal and cultural structures. Padura characterizes the transformative aspects of the human figure in terms of magic: "*la presencia del mago como ente catalizador y propiciador de lo sobrenatural le permite al autor contextualizar la preeminencia de lo mágico en el ámbito americano y su funcionamento a partir de una fe.*[85] / the presence of the magician as a catalyzing entity and promoter of the supernatural permits the author to contextualize the preeminence of magical in the scope of the Americas and its function from a position of faith."[86] From this perceptive, the figure who exposes the marvelous is the one who possesses the ability to wield it in its various forms. Therefore, the distinction between the limitations of Mackandal's abilities in animal versus human form are of worthy note when taking this point into account; as animal he flies, burrows, and gallops, but as human, he is bound to his knowledge of nature's herbs and plants to make the poisons with which he launches his initial attacks on the plantation owners. Hence, Mackandal's Power in this human state has not yet become of *this* world. It is not until he is captured and sentenced to death by burning that he exhibits his true power while in human form when he leaps into flight and escapes his execution through the air. It is by becoming the embodiment and literal manifestation of the "flying African" that Mackandal transcends myth by performing for an audience

[85] Padura Fuentes, 137
[86] Translation Mine

within the text. The moment of imminent death becomes a repeated site of transformation: when it occurs at the execution, it allows him to possess the Power of the *natural* world in *this* world, the one bound by the societal structures that categorize him as property; when it comes as he loses his arm to the centrifuge, his body is transformed, giving him the desire to seek freedom in nature. Both of these acts of Resistance trace their origin to the factory and to the moment when Mackandal loses his arm to the will of the sugar mill. Although this is not to say that the will of the machine itself catalyzes the act of Resistance, when a subject, even a systemic one, unveils it has will to impose, then the subjected may recognize the possibility of refusing to submit.

Invisible Man also situates a factory as the point where true sight is achieved. After being suspended from college and moving to New York City in search of work with Bledsoe's letters as reference, the narrator comes to realize that Bledsoe will not honor the promise that he will be allowed to reenroll in school the following semester. Upon delivering the final of the seven reference letters to one of Bledsoe's contacts, the protagonist learns that the letters are meant to dissuade the contacts from offering him any assistance. Taking pity on the narrator, the son of the last contact, Mr. Emerson, sets him up with a job at a paint factory where he begins working the following day. Here, like in Carpentier's two novels, the machines of labor impose their will as the factory itself is a site where utterances are silenced. When Invisible Man is introduced to

his first supervisor at the paint factory, who then directs him to mix batches of paint, the narrator comments, "the boy read my name off a card."[87] Although the narrator's name is spoken, the narrator denies its knowledge to the reader. Even so, the name exists, now spoken and already written on his new employment card within the text. And yet his name never becomes part of the paint factory's memory, although present on the card the receptionist reads, the circumstances that follow will lead to his expulsion from the factory and never being cataloged into the company's payroll. For the paint factory, this worker never existed.

After ruining the batches of paint he is in charge of, Invisible Man is sent to work in the furnace room under Lucius Brockway, a black union-suspicious worker who is immediately concerned with the reason for the narrator's presence in his workspace. Upon their meeting, the narrator recounts: "I told him [my name], shouting it in the roar of the furnaces."[88] Here, once again, the factory silences the utterance of the narrator's name; even when shouting out, it is drowned out by the noise of the machines. In meeting Brockway, the narrator encounters the factory source personified as he declares proudly, "Everybody knows I been here since there's been a here—even helped dig the first foundation. The Old Man hired me, nobody else; and, by God, it'll take the Old Man to fire me."[89] And so, from the belly of the factory, Brockway declares his

[87] Invisible Man, p. 194
[88] Invisible Man, p. 204
[89] Invisible Man, p. 205

dominance; by being the only one in the present employment structure who witnessed and labored through the factory's origin, he assumes a position of Authority through proximity, like that of Ti Noël to his master when purchasing the horse. Brockway claims that his position and subsequent Authority can only be stripped from him by a source of Power: the factory's legitimate owner. In the absence of that Power, Authority dominates. Hence, Brockway's reservations and suspicions of the union trying to take away his job are not grounded in inherent anti-union sentiment; they arise from what he views as a challenge to his Authority in the absence of the factory's proprietor. This dichotomy is expressed in the narrator's description when he first meets the old man in the furnace room: "He gave me a long, suspicious look and spat upon a hot pipe, causing it to steam furiously. I watched him remove a heavy engineer's watch from his breast pocket and squint at the dial importantly, then turn to check it with an electric clock that glowed from the wall."[90] The relationship between Brockway's pocket watch and the wall's glowing electric clock is representative of his role in the factory itself. The pocket watches of the time would have been mechanical, powered by a mainspring that one must wind periodically in order to ensure the watch continues to function properly. Mechanically speaking, winding the mainspring causes tension that is released as the spring unwinds. This transfers the torque to the balance spring of the watch

[90] Invisible Man, p. 206

where it is harnessed and released at a mechanically-set frequency through the watch's escapement in a rapid ticking succession. The impossibly fast ticking of the watch mechanism creates the illusion of the sweeping hand across the watch's face watch and causes the tick-tick-tick sound that mimics the human heartbeat. Electric clocks, like the one on the furnace room wall, on the other hand, are powered by a synchronous motor which, barring a power outage, are the most accurate of time-keeping devices over time. The sweeping hand of the electric clock is a true sweep because of the rotary nature of its motor and as a result, superior to the beating-time-heart that Brockway pulls out of his breast pocket. The time shown on his watch would have been inaccurate in the context of the real time the furnace room clock read. However, Brockways statement that "….*we the machines inside the machine*"[91] mechanizes the human body as the knowledge that drives the mechanics of industry. The inaccurate time of his own watch is irrelevant in the world of the furnace room where he is the one who dictates time. Like Mackandal, Brockaway's relationship with the machinery has been rendered mechanical, regulated by time and like Mackandal, the un-synching of his internal clock has catastrophic repercussions that catalyze the forthcoming events of the novel.

When Brockway picks a fight with Invisible Man thinking he is protecting his territory, they can no longer tend to the gauges on the

[91] Invisible Man, p. 213

furnace room leading to a pressure build up that begins to rip the machinery apart. The will of the factory reacts violently towards those who are meant to tend to its needs and desires by assaulting them physically. The narrator describes the moment of destruction leading up to the eventual explosion:

> It was a fall into space that seemed not a fall but a suspension. Then a great weight landed upon me and I seemed to sprawl in an interval of clarity beneath a pile of broken machinery, my head pressed back against a huge wheel, my body splattered with a stinking goo. Somewhere an engine ground in furious futility, grating loudly until a pain shot around the curve of my head and bounced me off into blackness for a distance, only to strike another pain that lobbed me back. And in that clear instant of consciousness I opened my eyes to a blinding flash.[92]

The machines falling apart around him, towards him, seeking his death, disrupt the narrator's feeling of being grounded. By being suspended into space, the narrator hovers over it, seeing into the abyss where nothingness stares back. The machinery itself pulls the narrator into the perception of suspended space where it begins to beat on the narrator, inflicting a level of violence that eventually results in the machine's self-destruction. In granting him an "instant of consciousness" amidst the

[92] Invisible Man, p. 225-226

beating, the machine explodes into a knockout punch, which comes to stunt his experience of time by rendering him unconscious. The narrator describes his mental state upon waking up:

> Something had been disconnected. For though I had seldom used my capacities for anger and indignation, I had no doubt that I possessed them; and, like a man who knows that he must fight, whether angry or not, when called a son of a bitch, I tried to *imagine* myself angry—only to discover a deeper sense of remoteness. I was beyond anger. I was only bewildered.[93]

Whereas Mackandal's disconnect from the world precedes the literal amputation of his arm, Invisible Man depicts his isolation as one that separates emotion and action through dissociation. The subsequent performance of unnecessary electro-shock therapy on the narrator without his consent imposes a scientific experimentation on Invisible Man's body that exacerbates the feeling of detachment the narrator experiences throughout the explosion event. This occurrence reconfigures the narrator's perception of the world without altering its reality. The therapy exposes the void of his place in the experience by erasing his name:

> A tremor shook me; it was as though he had suddenly given a name to, had organized the vagueness that drifted through

[93] Invisible Man, p. 233

> my head, and I was overcome with swift shame. I realized that I no longer knew my own name. I shut my eyes and shook my head with sorrow…. I tried desperately, diving below the blackness until I was limp with fatigue.[94]

The blackness marks the absence of identity, shocked out of the narrator by the jolting presence of pain. Awareness of conscious reality drifts away, leaving only the body to sustain through the rigors of literal mental torture. The ability to endure imbues the narrator with the desire to resist death, which plants the seeds of Resistance that he comes to develop towards the novel's conclusion. He states:

> I had no desire to destroy myself even if it destroyed the machine; I wanted freedom, not destruction. It was exhausting, for no matter what the scheme I conceived, there was one constant flaw—myself. There was no getting around it. I could no more escape than I could think of my identity.[95]

Here, succumbing to the attack of electro-shock therapy on his body is not a moment of passive surrender but rather, a recognition of the function of the machine's own will. The machine itself is representative of the collective factory and the violence it has enacted upon his body. His own destruction does not destroy the will of the machine; it simply eliminates his own consciousness as something that can be acted upon. His absence does not create a void; he is simply replaced within the

[94] Invisible Man, p. 235
[95] Invisible Man, p.238

scheme of exploitation. Hence, he recognizes that he is the "constant flaw" of his desire for freedom evidenced through his formulating schemes of escape. Removing himself from the collective wills that struggle for the production of power simply allows for the discarding of his labor in the process of that production. Therefore, being released from the factory hospital and dismissed from his job for not being up for the "…rigors of industry"[96] equates the narrator with the discarded labor of industrial production situating the factory as the centrality of will as Carpentier does in *El reino de este mundo* and *Écue-Yamba-Ó*.

Gendered Race and the Scales of Power

Each text depicts an instance in which a female character is subjugated to the male gaze in order to subvert its hegemonic function. The occurrences, however, are grounded in distinct reiterations of the Power/Authority relationship vis-à-vis language, reaffirming how the in(di)visible renegotiates the binary through a subversion that allows the recasting of the text as an act of Resistance. In *Écue Yamba Ó,* the gendered distinction between Power and Authority begins from a conception of foreignness. A sequence of the novel's various passages describing Cuba's landscape focuses on the catastrophic events that occur when a hurricane hits the Island:

[96] Invisible Man, p. 242

> *Los árboles extranjeros caen, uno tras otro, mientras las ceibas y los júcaros resisten a pie firme…Las olas hacen bailar cadáveres encogidos como fetos gigantescos.*[97] / The foreign trees fell, one by one, while the *ceiba* and *júcaro* trees held their ground…The waves made dance the cadavers huddled like giant fetuses.[98]

The narrator embarks on a recollection of the landscape in the wake of the storm that begins with the Island's trees. Here, the native trees have withstood the natural disaster while the roots of the trees planted across generations of conquest are exposed as a consequence of their own foreignness. The storm uncovers the non-belonging of the trees by rendering the roots visible. This gesture exposes and thus makes visible the absence of roots associated with authentic nativeness. As such, Carpentier depicts an apparent contradiction as an all-encompassing state of being: having of roots does not make one of a given place, the roots must be of a certain kind. Following this image with another that presents simultaneous life and death through the image of dancing corpses in fetus form, the text solidifies the position of nature and in particular, geography, as an agent of Power.

The narrator goes on to describe the futility of coveting visibility:

> *En este mundo lo visible era bien poca cosa. Las criaturas vivían engañadas por un cúmulo de apariencias groseras, bajo*

[97] *Écue-Yamba-Ó*, p. 45-46
[98] Translation Mine

> *la mirada compasiva de entidades superiores.*[99] / In this world, the visible was small time. Creatures lived deceived by a culmination of crude appearances under the compassionate gaze of superior entities.[100]

Here, the observation is not necessarily a distinction between visibility and invisibility but rather, a commentary on the relationship the two share. As the narrator expresses the things one is able to see are "small time" and as such, the privileging of that which is seen over that which is not is already predicated on a deception imposed by a "superior" Power, that it can see *them* but they cannot see *it*. Furthermore, while the narrator describes the gaze of this entity as "compassionate," the previous designation of the visibility of that which is apparent as "crude" subverts any notion of the power entity that gazes upon them lacks self-interest. Not only does this gesture undermine the belief that the spiritual entities upon which the novel's narrator and protagonists depend for spiritual relief are inherently benevolent, it also affirms the move towards blurring categorical distinctions as a condition of Resistance.

As the novel begins to focus more on the life of Menegildo, Usebio's son, the social tensions inherent to the rural monoculture society in the text come forth. When Menegildo meets Longina—the woman with whom he comes to have an affair—for the first time, the presence of the male

[99] *Écue-Yamba-Ó*, p. 58
[100] Translation Mine

gaze once again emerges. Immediately upon seeing Longina as he walks back to his home in the late evening, Menegildo expresses disgust towards her in order to insist on his superiority as a denial of his attraction: "*Y escupió, para demostrarse el desprecio que le producían esos negros inferiores.*[101] / He spit to demonstrate the disdain that inferior blacks produced in him."[102] Here, it does not matter to Menegildo that both he and Longina are black. By insisting on categorical designations that depend on attributing inferiority to "other" blacks, Menegildo suppresses the romantic/sexual desire that he will come to feel for Longina on ideological grounds. Furthermore, Menegildo's visceral reaction is narcissistic given that he blames his action of spitting is caused by a feeling "produced in him" by so-called "inferior blacks." Therefore, because the grotesque ejaculating of saliva is produced as Menegildo gazes on Longina and as a consequence of how she makes him feel, she is blamed for his insult. He inwardly accuses her for triggering his actions because he is not reacting to Longina, but rather, to the feelings she is creating in him.

Moreover, Menegildo deems Longina's blackness as inferior because he believes her to be a Haitian immigrant to Cuba, a mistake that language quickly corrects:

> *Había regresado por la sorpresa que le causaba oírla hablar «en cubano». Debía ser de la tierra, porque casi ninguna*

[101] *Écue-Yamba-Ó*, p. 72
[102] Translation Mine

> *haitiana lograba hacerse entender con «el patuá ese de alla…».*[103] / He returned because of the surprise that overcame him when she spoke "in Cuban." She must be of this land because no Haitian ever succeeded in making themselves understood with that accent from "*over there*."[104]

Menegildo reassesses his assumption of Longina after hearing her speak and the sound of her Cuban accent undermines his preconceived impression. It is important to note that Menegildo recognizes her manner of speaking as more than just an accent; by designating her use of language as speaking "in Cuban," the protagonist invokes the cultural and performative aspects of language itself. Whereas her physical appearance initially leads him to spit in disgust, the sound of her speech now piques his interest. In this regard, Longina is cast as having a level of agency over how others perceive her. In the literal sense and this particular encounter, Longina's voice dictates the terms of desire that she inspires in Menegildo.

Keeping this first meeting in mind when we read Mengildo and Longina's future interactions, it becomes apparent that communication takes on a formative role in their developing relationship. In describing the subsequent interactions between the soon-to-be-lovers, the narrator pays particular attention to the idiosyncrasies of their communication:

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[103] *Écue-Yamba-Ó*, p. 73
[104] Translation Mine

> *Otro día se miraron durante largo rato a distancia. Se hicieron señas que ninguno entendió… Una noche, ella le tiró una flor silvestre que olía a gasolina. Pero cada vez que Menegildo intentaba acercarse, lo detenía un atemorizado ademán. La mujer parecía temer algo. Moviendo hacia él la palma de la mano le decía siempre: «Aguarda…»*[105] / Another day they gazed at each other for long time from a distance. They made gestures to one another, which neither understood… One evening, she tossed him a wild flower that smelled of gasoline. But every time that Mengeildo attempted to get closer, a terrorized expression held him back. The woman appeared to fear something. Moving the palm of her hand towards him in a way that said: "Stay back…"[106]

The root of the fear Menegildo observes in Longina is unknown to him, although the reader is fully aware that she has another lover, a Haitian man named Napoleon, with whom she is living. Thus, the distance that Longina insists Menegildo maintain ensures that the earliest moments of their relationship are predicated on the presence of the male gaze and the desire it produces. They are only seeing each other and not acting out physically the desire the gaze internalizes. Menegildo's desire for Longina is not only fueled by his gazing upon her in the distance, but that very gaze sustains desire itself in a machination of self-

[105] *Écue-Yamba-Ó*, p. 78
[106] Translation Mine

reinforcement. In this regard, the fact that neither one of them understands the gestures the other is making does not show a lack of communication; instead, it functions as an affirmation of Longina's own ability to bend the gaze towards what she desires. Such agency is predicated on Longina controlling her own desires so that Menegildo will give in to his. As such, she uses desire to subjugate the idea of agency itself and places her self in control of the evolving relationship. The distinction between how both characters deal with their own levels of desire also draws attention to Menegildo's own youth and immaturity and continues to unfold into the reality of his virginity:

> *Después de un momento de indecisión, Menegildo decidió regresar al bohío. Se sentía inquieto, inexplicablemente inquieto, al darse cuenta, de manera vaga, que un nuevo equilibrio se establecía en su ser. Era como si hubiese cambiado de piel, bajo el influjo de un clima insospechado. Una palpitante alegría hacía oscilar un gran péndulo detrás de sus pectorales cuadrados, que ya conocían contacto de mujer…*[107] / After a moment of indecision, Menegildo decided to return to his shack. He felt restless, inexplicably restless, upon realizing in a vague way, that a new equilibrium established itself in his being. It was as if he had changed his own skin, under the influence of an undreamed

[107] *Écue-Yamba-Ó*, p. 89

> atmosphere. A throbbing glee oscillated like a grand pendulum bend his square chest, that now knew a woman's touch…"[108]

The consummation of the relationship serves as a catalyst for a realization of being that settles on a sense of "equilibrium." Here, the restlessness of the body marks a moment when coming of age is not designated by a gendered concept that imposes hierarchy such as manhood. Furthermore, Menegildo also sheds the racialized hierarchy by which he deemed Longina as inferior the first time he looks upon her through the feeling of having "changed his own skin." In this regard, that the narrator characterizes Menegildo's body after his first sexual experience in reference to this state of balance undermines the idea of the sexual act as an event of male over female conquest. By stripping the sexual act of its cultural and gendered markers of conquest, the novel reframes the event within the scaled perspective of Power/Authority that Carpentier seeks to elucidate.

In *El reino de este mundo*, Carpentier revisits the perceived dynamics of the male/female encounter as a means of subverting Power structures based on gender through the figure of Pauline Bonaparte, the scandalous sister of Napoleon. By delving into the historical realities of the Power relations between race and gender through the fictionalized representation of historical figures, Carpentier shows how the *marvelous*

[108] Translation Mine

reality of his writing cuts through constructed social realities. In so doing, Carpentier exposes how a formulation of Power/Autority vis-à-vis the in(di)visible, consists of scaled events at the individual level. The text introduces Pauline to the reader after she has set sail for Saint Domingue[109] with her husband, Charles Leclerc, the General Napoleon sends to reestablish control of the colonial territory. Although she reportedly refuses to go on the journey and has to be carried onto the ship by force, the reader sees her as the embodiment of her sexualized reputation:

> *Al alba, el vigía descubrió, con grato desasosiego, la presencia de una mujer desnuda, dormida sobre una vela doblada, a la sombra del foque de mesana. Creyendo que se trataba de una de las camaristas, estuvo a punto de deslizarse hacia ella por una maroma. Pero un gesto de la durmiente, anunciador del pronto despertar, le reveló que contemplaba el cuerpo de Paulina Bonaparte. Ella se frotó los ojos, riendo como un niño, toda erizada por el alisio mañanero, y, creyéndose protegida de las miradas por las lonas que le ocultaban el resto de la cubierta, se vació varias baldes de agua dulce sobre los hombros. Desde aquella noche durmió siempre al aire libre…*[110] / At dawn the lookout discovered, with pleasant

[109] The Republic of Haiti, referred to here as Saint Domingue, declares independence from French colonial rule in 1804.
[110] *El reino de este mundo*, p. 82

> surprise, a naked woman asleep on a folded sail in the shadow of the mizzenmast jib. Thinking her one of the stewardesses, he was on the point of sliding down a rope to join her. But a gesture of the sleeper, indicating that she was awakening, revealed to him that the body he was feasting his eyes on was that of Pauline Bonaparte. She rubbed her eyes, laughing like a child, her hair all blown about by the morning breeze, and, thinking herself protected by the canvas that hid the rest of the deck from her, poured several buckets of fresh water over her shoulders. From that night on she slept in the open…[111]

This passage portrays Pauline as Venus come to life, the sun rising against the backdrop of canvas sails. The wordplay on double consciousness within the text allows the concept to recede into the background of the scene as it anchors the relationship of the gaze to the event. This play on double consciousness is apparent in the perceived division created by the canvas sailcloth that allows the lookout to assume he is unseen in comparison to the "vela doblada" or folded sail that Pauline uses as a makeshift resting place. An alternative translation for "vela doblada" could be *doubled veil* as among other things *vela* in Spanish can mean sail, veil, or candle in its feminine noun form while *doblada* refers to that noun as being doubled or folded. In this regard,

[111] The Kingdom of this World, p. 86-87

the textual image is that of Pauline Bonaparte atop double consciousness itself vis-à-vis the folded sailcloth made mattress and it is her position of power as the general's wife that renders the lookout unable to carry out his desires.

When taking into account Pauline's historical reputation for scandal and the fact that the lookout "[thought] her one of the stewardesses," to the extent that "he was on the point of sliding down a rope to join her," it is apparent that Pauline is not only aware that she is being observed, but she is also cognizant of how her social status renders the lookout into a mere spectator who does not pose a threat. For if the lookout can only ever observe from a location that everyone on the vessel is already aware of, then the gaze itself is subverted by turning the gendered implications of Power on their head. Here, the Power of the gaze reaches a state of equilibrium with the observed by virtue of being aware of the gaze's presence.

This gendered subversion of Power later takes on a racial tone in an almost literal sense once Pauline's journey across the Atlantic is complete: "*Se reía cuando el espejo de su alcoba le revelaba que su tez, bronceada por el sol, se había vuelto la de una espléndida mulata.*[112] / She laughed when her bedroom mirror revealed to her that her skin, tanned by the sun, had become that of a splendid mulatto."[113] Here, the physical change in the color of Pauline's skin marks her geographical

[112] *El reino de este mundo*, p. 86
[113] The Kingdom of this World, p. 91

shift from Europe to the Caribbean. The process of literally crossing the Atlantic darkens her. At the end of the journey, however, Pauline becomes aware of her new skin through a mirror's reflection of her body and is therefore staring at an inverted image of herself. As such, the image of Pauline looking in the mirror echoes the "*vela doblada*" of the ship, the inverted sides that match up when folded and constitute the whole. Her amusement at such a transformation signals an embracing of her newfound darkened skin. Through her characterization as "mulatto," Carpentier enlists her into the ranks of characters who become figures of Resistance against white male hegemonic structures of Power within the novel. It is understanding how Pauline Bonaparte connects to the other figures of Resitance in the novel—Ti Noël and Mackandal—that Carpentier's conceptualization of the marvelous real steps forth. As González Echevarría summarizes, "The unity of *The Kingdom of this World* has preoccupied critics who have wondered if the story is nothing but a series of extraordinary scenes collected somewhat chaotically, without a unifying plot…Carpentier nevertheless speaks of a '*succession* of extraordinary events' in the prologue."[114] If in identifying the "succession" to which Carpentier refers we find the key for the novel's thematic, then it is apparent that *El reino de este mundo*, like *Écue-Yamba-Ó*, is invested in examining how the representation of Power/Authority at the individual level resists and re-categorizes

[114] González Echevarría, p. 135

formulations of Power in the abstract. The plot for Carpentier is always iterations of Resistance.

In both Carpentier novels, the female figures transition from a position of perceived objectification to that of inverting the patriarchal Power structure by destabilizing the very event of objectification. Ellison, however, invokes the figure of an idealized American female body—blonde, light eyes, thin—as a symbol of democratic free spirit in order to expose the illusion of perceived liberty. In *Invisible Man*, the female presence again emerges as a white-skinned woman and her representation echos how Carpentier introduces the female as a catalyst for Resistance. One of the earliest stories the narrator recounts is when he is invited to give a speech at an event and receives a college scholarship as a reward for writing an essay that advocateses the social advancement of black people through passivity, hard work, and the knowing of one's place. In reality, the event is set up as a gathering where several young men, including the narrator, are forced to fight each other for the entertainment of the white, male crowd. Critics refer to this scene as the Battle Royal. Before the fighting commences, an exotic dancer takes center stage:

> The hair was yellow like that of a circus kewpie doll, the face heavily powdered and roughed, as though to form an abstract mask, the eyes hollow and smeared a cool blue, the color of a baboon's butt. I felt a desire to spit upon her as my

> eyes brushed slowly over her body. Her breasts were firm and round as the domes of East Indian temples, and I stood so close as to see the fine skin texture and beads of pearly perspiration glistening like dew around the pink and erected buds of her nipples.[115]

The whiteness of the woman takes on the form of caricature and her humanity is abstracted to the point of being reduced to wild animal in the description of her "baboon's butt" eye make-up. The foreignness of the woman's body marked by the allusion to "East Indian temples," serves as a referent for the sexual inexperience of the young black men. This descriptive wordplay mocking the young men becomes a physical manifestation when one of them faints upon seeing the woman's body and another develops an erection that embarrasses him because his underwear is unable to conceal it. Here, the sexuality of the young men undergoes its own form of exploitation serving as a counterpoint to the sexual exploitation of the female dancer. The narrator's expressed desire to "spit upon her" echoes the feeling of desire towards the repulsion as already seen when Menegildo meets Longina in *Écue Yamba Ó*. Whereas Menegildo spits at Longina, Invisible Man cannot spit at the dancer. The narrator does not follow through because his blackness limits his ability to act freely as much as the woman's gender establishes the expectations of how she is to act in this scene. Both the black men and the white

[115] Invisible Man, p. 19

woman find themselves under the control of the white men, their agency stripped to appease the white male desire for entertainment. Within the scaled perspective of Power, they are both objectified.

The symbolic representation of the woman takes on a nationalistic overtone when the narrator continues his description of her body through the lens of his desire:

> I wanted….to stroke where below the small American flag tattooed upon her belly her thighs formed a capital V. I had a notion that of all in the room she saw only me with her impersonal eyes….the smoke of a hundred cigars clinging to her like the thinnest of veils…I was transported."[116]

Here, the desire for her body merges with language as the area representative of the woman's reproductive system begins to spell out vagina. The narrator both desires and is forbidden from the sexual organ. Furthermore, that her body has a tattoo of ther American flag underpins the duality that it is not only the sexualized white woman who is being denied to him but also the whiteness that constitutes Americanness. At this point in the Battle Royal, the objectification of the woman at the hands of the white men develops into a narcissistic abstraction where her agency is hollowed out of her "impersonal eyes" that only saw him. It is in this moment when the text comes to strip the woman of her perceived agency, exposing to the narrator that she is as much an object

[116] Invisible Man, p. 19

within the event as he is when some among the white men cease to be observers and begin to grope the dancer. Her panic gives her the impulse to flee before the narrator begins to describe the crowd taking physical control of her body: "They caught her just as she reached a door, raised her from the floor, and tossed her as college boys are tossed at hazing, and above her red, fixed-smiling lips I saw the terror and disgust in her eyes, almost like my own terror and that which I saw in some of the other boys."[117] Here, the recognition that race and gender are both being objectified stems from the reality that the performers—the boys and the woman— become mutual spectators. This reversal, in which the audience moves from passive observers towards instigating participants, exposes the performative act as a cultural one that is already predicated on the veiled influence of Power. This is not a means to equate the sexual exploitation of the women with the racial exploitation of the young men; however, that the objectification of the black men is contingent on their emasculation sexualizes their treatment in such a way that explores how distinct forms of exploitation are not in competition for mutual exclusivity.

The image of the veil itself manifests in physical form when the narrator and the other young men are blindfolded before they are forced to pummel each other in the Battle Royal. While the narrator assumes that he cannot see past the blindfold, he eventually comes to realize that

[117] Invisible Man, p. 20

it is possible to glimpse beyond the veil: “Pushed this way and that by the legs milling around me, I finally pulled erect and discovered that I could see the black sweat-washed forms weaving in the smoky-blue atmosphere like drunken dancers weaving to the rapid drum-like thuds of blows.”[118] The narrator uses his ability to perceive the morion of the bodies through his veiled eyes to his advantage and avoids the clusters of fighting bodies so as to ensure his survival. Once again, finding himself as spectator to his own objectification, the narrator comes to realize that his perceived plan still shuts him out from a true formulation of individual Resistance because he lacks access to the consciousness of the collective: “Then I understood. The boys had arranged it among themselves. It was the custom for the two men left in the ring to slug it out for the winner’s prize. I discovered this too late.”[119] Here, the narrator’s outsider status within the crowd is further solidified. Given that the narrator is at the event to give a speech and collect a reward for a “best essay” contest in his school, this scene sets the stage to undermine the role that recognition plays in the power/authority relationship by introducing the ways in which perception influences the conceptualization of scaled Power.

[118] Invisible Man, p. 22-23
[119] Invisible Man, p. 24

Erupting Violence and Recasting Resistance

The violent revolt to overthrow Henri Christophe at the conclusion of *The Kingdom of this World* parallels both the final riot in *Invisible Man* and the gang war that ends *Écue-Yamba-Ó.* These three scenes recast Resistance as an alternative to bloodshed by underlining the futility inherent to acts of physical violence. This is not to say that violence cannot or must not be part of Resistance itself, but rather, that violence enacted by humans on physical bodies is a systemic perpetuation of oppression itself and therefore, does not stake a point of opposition against that system of oppression. Power systems as formulated through nation/state constructs in the Americas are already predicated on the expectation of sporadic violence as evidenced through their own violent liberations from colonial empires. As such, the violent overthrow of a particular government power is not in and of itself "revolutionary" in the post-colony; true Revolution stems from the Resistance necessary to prevent new orders from resorting to the tactics of the oppressor, which inevitably result in conditioned transfers of Power. It is in the striving towards Resistance that the characters of Carpentier and Ellison recast the gesture of violence as a true revolutionary act.

In *El reino de este mundo*, Ti Noël's tendency towards Resistance stems from the Power inherent to the persistence of memory. The relationship between Power and memory is expressed clearly when Ti

Nöel leaves Cuba and returns to the planation where he was born into slavery in Haiti:

> *La hacienda toda estaba hecha de un erial atravesado por un camino. Ti Noel se sentó sobre una de las piedras esquineras de la antigua vivienda, ahora piedra como otra cualquiera para quien no recordase tanto. Estaba hablando con las hormigas cuando un ruido inesperado le hizo volver la cabeza.*[120] / The plantation had turned into a wasteland crossed by a road. Ti Noel sat down on one of the cornerstones of the old mansion, now a stone like any other stone for those who did not remember. He was talking to the ants when a sudden noise made him turn his head.[121]

This wasteland has no meaning without memory; without Ti Noël to recall what it once was, the reader only sees the land in its current state. The former plantation does not exist until Ti Noël rediscovers and recognizes its ruins across the wasteland. That he sits next to the cornerstone is telling given its purpose in masonry to dictate the position of all the stones that come after it. Because the final position of the structure is already prefigured by the cornerstone, one sees how its role as referent mirrors the function of memory in the cognitive sense. The cornerstone becomes the trigger that sets off the flood of memory. In this regard, Ti Noël and the cornerstone function as counterpoints of

[120] *El reino de este mundo*, p. 100
[121] The Kingdom of this World, p. 106

memory: the slave and the plantation, as the means to expose the historical realities that social structures render inevitable. Here, the function of counterpoint goes beyond that which functions as a referent through a juxtaposition by bringing into perspective the entirety of the forgotten space. The counterpoint functions as the in(di)visible, rendering the void present and in that moment, memory of history makes it real.

This oscillation of memory as counterpoint brackets the novel itself through the interjection of musical tonality. During the early stages of the novel and then again towards its conclusion, the protagonist recalls the same song from an even earlier memory:

> *Ti Noel, en contrapunteo mental, tarareó para sus adentros una copla marinera, muy cantada por los toneleros del puerto, en que se echaban mierdas al rey de Inglaterra. De lo último si estaba seguro, aunque la letra no estuviese en créole.*[122] / Ti Noel, in a kind of mental counterpoint, silently hummed a chanty that was very popular among the harbor coopers, heaping ignominy[123] on the King of England. This he was sure of even though the words were not in Creole.[124]

In this first instance, the counterpoint between silence and utterance occurs within Ti Noël. His humming is not in and of itself the act of Resistance but rather, the humming is the act that transforms Ti Noël

[122] *El reino de este mundo*, p. 25
[123] The English translation is more civil in its translation of "echaban mierdas," which translates more literally to "heaping shit upon" and usually phrased more colloquially as "talking shit."
[124] The Kingdom of this World, p. 10

into a figure of Resistance: the silence and the utterance are in(di)visible. The humming is not rebellious; it is the act of humming that turns him into a rebel. While it is easy to imagine that Ti Noël simply hums this mariner song aloud, the lengths to which the text goes to destabilize the vocal act itself mark the hum as a move towards Resistance. As the text states, he is not humming to himself but *into* himself, towards the depths of his being and in doing so resisting the body's physiological desire to produce sound.[125] When thinking silently to oneself, resisting the urge to say the words aloud is a rather simple task; when trying to hum or even sing, however, one must resist the guttural reaction that stems from the desire to complete the mental activity by connecting it with a sonic production. In this context, the unnatural resistance that Ti Noël must consciously be aware of allows for the becoming of Resistance.

The disconnect between the processes of the mind versus the body resonates when it occurs, once again, toward the novel's end. When Christophe's citadel is near completion, Ti Noël sneaks off and makes his way back again to the lands of Lenormand de Mezy. Along the way, he stops in the port city and has several drinks of brandy. As a result, his making it back to the ruins of the plantation is not so much a deliberate act of the mind but a function of the mechanical memory of the inebriated body:

[125] "[P]ara sus adentros" expresses the idea of "into oneself," literally.

> *Tambaleándose a la luz de la luna, tomó el camino del regreso, recordando vagamente una canción de otros tiempos, que solía cantar siempre que volvía de la ciudad. Una canción en la que se decían groserías a un rey. Eso era lo importante: a un rey. Así, insultando a Henri Christophe, cansándose de imaginarias exoneraciones en su corona y su prosapia, encontró tan corto el andar que, cuando se echó sobre su jergón de barba de indio, llegó a preguntarse si había ido realmente a la Ciudad del Cabo.*[126] / Staggering in the moonlight, he set out for home, vaguely recalling a song that in other days he had sung on his way back from the city. A song that was all insults to a king. That was the important thing: *to a king*. And in this way unburdening himself of every insult he could think up to Henri Christophe, his crown, and his progeny, Ti Noel found the way back so short that when he stretched himself out on his straw pallet, he even asked himself if he had really gone to the Cap.[127]

His recalling of the song brackets the journey to self-realization in way that echoes the transformation of *Invisible Man*'s narrator as textually marked by the prologue and epilogue of Ellison's novel. Furthermore, Ti Noël's drunken recollection blurs the lines of perception by shedding light on the ambiguity of Authority in its relation to Power, meaning that

[126] *El reino de este mundo*, p. 115-116
[127] The Kingdom of this World, p. 126-127

when staking a claim against Power, the attack on the figure of Authority can be non-specific. This becomes clear when taking into account that Ti Noel only cares that the song attacked "any king," not the individual, but the institution itself. Here, the relationship between desire and intent echoes the mind/body distinction in that the authority claimed by the latter is simply a product of the power wielded by the former.

This mind/body disconnect that leads Ti Noël back to de Mezy's former plantation is recast through the mirrored representation of Henri Christophe's body in his Sans-Souci palace. When the re-enslaved siege the palace as they rebel, Carpentier describes Christophe's moment of reflection:

> *El Salón de los Espejos no reflejó más figura que la del rey, hasta el trasmundo de sus cristales más lejanos. Y luego, esos zumbidos, esos roces, esos grillos del artesonado, que nunca se habían escuchado antes, y que ahora, con sus intermitencias y pausas, daban al silencio toda una escala de profundidad.*[128] / The Hall of Mirrors reflected only the figure of the King to the farthest reach of the most remote mirrors. And then, those buzzes, those slitherings, those crickets in the beamed ceilings which had never been heard before, and

[128] *El reino de este mundo*, p. 124-125

which now, with their intervals and rest, gave the silence a gamut of depth.[129]

The ever-presence of the King's mirrored image casts a figurative absence marked by the intermittent audible interjections of the palace's vermin. When all the text reflects is Christophe himself, the insect species dwelling in the palace make themselves known and in so doing, the eeriness of nature itself coats the text with the very sense of an abandoned palace. Since Ti Noël is one of the leaders during the sacking of Sans-Souci and even keeps one of the King's overcoats as a prized possession. By taking on the garment of the now deceased Christophe, Ti Noël physically fills the space of the man who escaped through suicide. In the wearing of another man's clothes, he dons another layer of the metaphorical skins that society insists dress us. Christophe's escape through suicide points to Ti Noël's own desire for escape. The surveyors who appear at the end of the novel to measure out the land in order to reclaim it for transfer as private property rekindle Ti Noël's desire for escape and begin his transition into a Mackandal-like figure:

El anciano comenzaba a desesperarse ante ese inacabable retoñar de cadenas, ese renacer de grillos, esa proliferación de miserias, que los más resignados acababan por aceptar como prueba de la inutilidad de toda rebeldía.[130] / The old man began to lose heart at this endless return of chains, this

[129] The Kingdom of this World, p. 138
[130] *El reino de este mundo*, p. 151

> rebirth of shackles, this proliferation of suffering, which the more resigned began to accept as proof of the uselessness of all revolt.[131]

In this description, Ti Noël is now a weak elderly man, an "*anciano*" who lacks the physical prowess he commanded throughout his life. Here, Ti Noël being disheartened is not indicative of surrender but rather, an acknowledgment of weariness as a consequence of the cyclical and therefore, historically frequent struggle between Power and Authority. Thus, the surveyors who measure, mark, and section the land are representative of those who hold the Authority to constantly redraw the lines that separate the public and private spheres in order to maintain the illusion that the system is, in fact, inclusive.

The realization that the removal of an Authority figure does nothing to destabilize the premise of Power itself inspires Ti Noel's coming to terms with the relationship between the world and humanity:

> *Y comprendía, ahora, que el hombre nunca sabe para quién padece y espera. Padece y espera y trabaja para gentes que nunca conocerá, y que a su vez padecerán y esperarán y trabajarán para otros que tampoco serán felices, pues el hombre ansía siempre una felicidad situada más allá de la porción que le es otorgada. Pero la grandeza del hombre está precisamente en querer mejorar lo que es. En imponerse*

[131] The Kingdom of this World, p. 171-172

Tareas. En el Reino de los Cielos no hay grandeza que conquistar, puesto que allá todo es jerarquía establecida, incógnita despejada, existir sin término, imposibilidad de sacrificio, reposo y deleite. Por ello, agobiado de penas y de Tareas, hermoso dentro de su miseria, capaz de amar en medio de las plagas, el hombre sólo puede hallar su grandeza, su máxima medida en el Reino de este Mundo.[132] / Now he understood that a man never knows for whom he suffers and hopes. He suffers and hopes and toils for people he will never know, and who, in turn, will suffer and hope and toil for others who will not be happy either, for man always seeks happiness far beyond that which is meted out to him. But man's greatness consists in the very fact of wanting to be better than he is. In laying duties upon himself. In the Kingdom of Heaven there is no grandeur to be won, inasmuch as there all is an established hierarchy, the unknown is revealed, existence is infinite, there is no possibility of sacrifice, all is rest and joy. For this reason, bowed down by suffering and duties, beautiful in the midst of his misery, capable of loving in the face of afflictions and

[132] *El reino de este mundo*, p. 156

> trails, man finds his greatness, his fullest measure, only in the Kingdom of This World.[133]

By positing that salvation is not a product of redemption and is, in fact, separated from the suffering attributed to acts of martyrdom, Ti Noël recasts the notion of a lived and yet spiritual life in terms that acknowledge death as the finitude of individual will. Hence, the revolt against Christophe depicted through the attack on Sans-Souci is a singular act of rebellion that fails to establish a point of Resistance because it results in an appropriation of the status quo whereby the Authority over the individual self creates the illusion of Power. Ti Noël's recognition of the rules at play in this world as opposed to the fixed hierarchies of the afterlife deploys the act of Resistance as a sustained move against Power itself. Such a move is predicated on the notion that self preservation is not a selfish act but rather, one that recognizes how the inevitability of death relegates the desire for continued life into a call to action. In other words, Resistance cannot be reduced to a process that brings about revolutionary change; the tension it places on systems of Power must always be present in order to shape the process of any given society. As Carpentier a shows us, sustainability is inherently the status quo.

The past/present historical critique vis-à-vis memory and Power finds an antecedent in Carpentier's interrogation of urban and rural life

[133] The Kingdom of this World, p. 178-179

in his first novel. In *Écue-Yamba-Ó*, Carpentier draws on the differences between farm and city life in tandem with an emphasis on the worldview these lifestyles create, in order to develop a critique of how the violence of colonization seeps into the occupation of everyday territory. One way the novel expresses this desire for occupation of territory occurs in its representation of male jealousy through Menegildo and Napoleón's fighting over Longina. Although we have already examined the polemical nature through which Mengeildo and Longina begin their tryst, that it occurs at the expense of cuckolding a man with an imposing and powerful body who shares a name with the French Emperor only leadas to chaos. When Napoleón finds out about the affair, he seeks out Menegildo, brutally attacks him, and leaves him for dead. Despite the horrific nature of this physical assault, Menegildo's family never considers the possibility of reporting its occurrence to a system of Authority:

> *La familia Cué estaba convencida—y en ello no andaba equivocada—que la Justicia y los Tribunales eran un invento de gentes complicadas, que de nada servía, como no fuera para enredar las cosas y embromar siempre al pobre que tiene la razón.*[134] / The Cué family was convinced—and they were not mistaken—that Justice and Tribunals were an invention of complicated peoples, serving no purpose other than to

[134] *Écue-Yamba-Ó*, p. 104

twist things in order to hoodwink the poor soul who is in the right.[135]

In an act of validation, the third-person narrator recognizes an inherent truth to the Cué's own attitudes towards the process of Justice as social structure. This sentiment exposes the reality that within the urban/rural dichotomy, even recognized Authority, in this case a legal system, delegitimizes itself by limiting access. Power, manifested as influence, dictates the terms of access and as such, maintains the segregation of societies. The text expresses this separation by juxtaposing music and capital through the exclamation "*¡El* bongó*, antídoto de Wall Street!*[136] / The *bongo*, antidote for Wall Street![137]" The percussion instrument as antidote depicts Wall Street as a malady for which a cure exists, therefore, maintaining segregation becomes a necessary goal for sustaining the societal control of capital.

A bridge of spectacle, however, straddles the urban and rural worlds. Menegildo is cousins with an athletic celebrity, a baseball player of such prowess that several social circles welcome his presence. It is through his association with his cousin and the spectacle of celebrity that Menegildo gains access to the urban world and to privileged parts of the rural sphere. When Menegildo is arrested for the attempted murder of Napoleón after seeking revenge for his assault, he is transported to the

[135] Translation Mine
[136] *Écue-Yamba-Ó*, p. 118
[137] Translation Mine

city jail in Havana where his cousin serves as a liaison and de facto attorney between Menegildo and the authorities. It is in the space of the prison that Menegildo begins to morph his worldview: "*Toda noción de redondez debe abandonarse cuando suena el cerrojo de un prisión.*[138] / All notion of roundness must be abandoned when the prison bars slam shut."[139] Although the political connections of Mengildo's cousin expedite an early release after Napoleón disappears and thus cannot testify as a witness in court, his sense of time and space are nevertheless transformed. By abandoning his formulations of "roundness," Mengildo loses all conceptualization of time as circular, as a perceived transition of cycles marked by the familiarity of the everyday. Even when taking into account the new routine prison life, the reality that Menegildo is removed from his rural surroundings and unleashed into the realities of an urban prison designates his current circumstance as a rebirth. As such, like a child, he must re-conceptualize his understanding of time in the context of this new way of life. When he is released from prison, the difficulty of his lifestyle transition is exacerbated as a disorientation of space compounds the shifts in his notion of time:

> *La invisibilidad del mar constituía una peculiaridad de aquella población. Cuando se escuchaban empellones líquidos bajo el pilotaje de los espigones, los almacene, hangares y vagones color de herrumbre se encargaban todavía de ocultar el agua*

[138] *Écue-Yamba-Ó*, p. 130
[139] Translation Mine

> *verde con una barrera inacabable.*[140] / The invisibility of the sea constituted a peculiarity of that city. When you heard the fluid crashing under the pilotage of breakwater, the storehouses, hangars and carriages insisted on concealing the green waters with an everlasting barrier.[141]

The life and structure of the city block off the visual presence of the ocean and as such, represent a perceptual divide between social and natural orders. The "invisibility" of the ocean, however, does not denote its absence; in fact, it contributes to the peculiarities of the city that begin to reorient Menegildo's conceptualization of his place in the world:

> *Ahora que la ciudad lograba borrar en él todo recuerdo de la vida rural, con las disciplinas de sol de savias y de luna que impone a quines pisan tierra, el mozo se adaptaba maravillosamente a una existencia indolente cuyas perezas se iban adentrando en su carne.*[142] / Now that the city achieved in erasing from him all memory of rural life, with the discipline of the sun, sap, and moon imposed on those who walk the soil, the young man adapted marvelously to an indolent existence whose laziness crept into his flesh.[143]

The ability for city-life to erase the memory of a life lived off the land establishes that beyond creating the desire for not returning to a past

[140] *Écue-Yamba-Ó*, p. 147
[141] Translation Mine
[142] *Écue-Yamba-Ó*, p. 172
[143] Translation Mine

life, the city itself can control the function of memory. The city acts upon the body in a way that is transformative to the process of the mind and therefore, functions as an entity with agency of its own. Hence, because it is not Menegildo who is lazy and uninterested but rather, the "indolent existence" of living in the city that creeps into his being, his mental and bodily transformations are byproducts of his willingness to conform to his new life. Thus, by not staking a position of Resistance against this way of life, Menegildo is caught up in the turf wars of Havana's afro-religious gangs.

Shortly after his release from prison he joins the ranks of a neighborhood gang of which his baseball-player cousin is a member. When he joins his cousin to confront a rival gang over a territorial dispute the subsequent violence results in Menegildo's murder:

> *Nubes de tormenta se cernían sobre la guerra invisible. Los truenos del otoño habían velado el y cielo aquella tarde, enfundando el sol y dejando luz de eclipse en la ciudad. Todavía el horizonte no olía a lluvias, y las olas del mar eran tan pesadas que no llevaban espumas.*[144] / Storm clouds loomed over the invisible war. The thunder of autumn had veiled the sky that day, sheathing the sun making the light

[144] *Écue-Yamba-Ó*, p. 182

> of an ecplise fall over the city. Still, the horizon did not smell of rain, the ocean waves were so heavy they lacked foam.[145]

Like the sea, the gang war is "invisible" in the sense that it gives form to the city through its power and not by virtue of its presence. Violence and nature impose their will on the landscape and carve Menegildo's essence out of the text through his death. This gesture exposes that hierarchies themselves are not what ground the natural order; adaptability is. Mengildo's flaw is that he adapted towards the structure and not towards Resistance. By becoming part of the already established order of the city as opposed to finding his own place within and along its pulse, Menegildo fails to find a place from which he can control the landscape—which, because of his farmer past, he has the ability to do—and instead, the city swallows him whole. After his death, Longina returns to Mengildo's family on the farm where she gives birth to his namesake son. The story does not come full circle; the cycle simply resets.

In Ellison's novel, the misidentification of the narrator as a man known around the neighborhood as Rinehart precedes the riot that concludes the main narration of Invisible Man's story. This misidentification posits the ambiguity of identity as a shift between Power and Authority that is also apparent in the transformation of Ras the Exhorter, the narrator's community rival. One evening while he is walking home, Invisible Man comes upon a rally that Ras has convened

[145] Translation Mine

in order to cultivate the thirst for violence as Resistance amongst his followers. During this rally, Ras the Exhorter declares that he has now become Ras the Destroyer and in so doing, he singles out the narrator from the crowd and marks him a traitor to the people because of his dealings with the Brotherhood. The crowd turns on Invisible Man and after he escapes from an altercation with some of Ras' followers, he hides in a shop where he procures a disguise that consists of sunglasses and a hat. Of the glasses themselves, the narrator comments, "They were of a green glass so dark that it appeared black, and I put them on immediately, plunging into blackness and moving outside."[146] Echoing the "one-drop-rule," the mere appearance of blackness renders the subject, in this case the subjectivity of perception, black. This moment of disguised re-entry into the world serves as a "plunge" into an abyss mirrored by the narrator not knowing whether or not the disguise would keep him safe. Hence, the unknowability of the abyss is rendered textually and becomes filtered through Invisible Man's own perception: "My eyes adjusted quickly; the world took on a dark-green intensity, the lights of cars glowed like stars, faces were a mysterious blur; the garish signs of movie houses muted down to a soft sinister glowing."[147] Like the widening of a pupil adjusting to the limited access of light—because it is only in pitch blackness that it is impossible to see—the narrator discerns the pigment of the world in the reality of his now present perception. The

[146] Invisible Man, p. 474
[147] Invisible Man, p. 474-475

green of the lenses does not filter the world through color but through darkness and in that, the narrator's desire to achieve an ambiguous identity presents him with a newfound perspective.

Invisible Man quickly realizes that people on the streets do not simply think that he resembles Rinehart; they believe that he is Rinehart himself. It is in this passing for another man that the narrator faces the limitations of a formed identity. When members of the Harlem community deflect the narrator's denials of being Rinehart as a joke, Invisible Man chooses to take on the identity of Rinehart to test the plausibility of his disguise. He approaches someone who knows him personally. The friend in question assumes he is interacting with the actual Rinehart and because the two have a history of tense interactions, they get into a physical fight, triggering the following reflection: "Here I'd set out to test a disguise on a friend and now I was ready to beat him to his knees—not because I wanted to but because of place and circumstance."[148] Here, what the narrator feels compelled to do imposes itself over how he desires to act. This tension between how the narrator acts and how he feels he should be acting posits identity as the determining factor that influences his original motive. Invisible Man chooses not to reveal himself as a friend to stop the attack, not because he insists on maintaining his disguise but because he would rather not have to justify why he was pretending to be someone else. Therefore, the

[148] Invisible Man, 480

"place and circumstance" is not a physical presence imposed by a societal structure; it is the flux state of identity itself as a trigger for specific emotion and behavior in the context of a given interaction. The narrator continues to play the game of pretend not to maintain his safety in disguise, but because he believes that he must in order to save face.

After leaving the bar, Invisible Man comes to recognize how to claim Resistance as a position of Power when he gathers more details regarding Rinehart's identity. When his attention turns to the neon lights of a neighborhood church, Invisible Man grabs a bill and steps into the streetlight to read the following:

> Behold the Invisible
>
> Thy will be done O Lord!
> I See all, Know all, Tell all, Cure all.
> You shall see the unknown wonders.
> —Rev. B.P. Rinehart
> *Spiritual Technologist*[149]

By equating the will of God with Invisibility, the written words of the real Reverend Rinehart on the piece of paper posit the potential of seeing "unknown wonders" as being different from possessing omniscience. Here, the totality of seeing, knowing, and curing the "all" is undercut by the particularity of the unknown. This shift from the macro to the micro perspective reaffirms the role of individual agency within a collective will

[149] Invisible Man, p. 487

and also serves as a connection between *Invisible Man* and Ellison's posthumous novel *Three Days Before the Shooting…*. Upon entering the church where Rinehart preaches, the narrator converses with two women, one of whom recalls the childhood days of Rinehart: "You know, Rever'n, I once heard you preach years ago. You was just a lil' ole twelve-year-ole boy, back in Virginia. And here I come North and find you, praise God, still preaching the gospel, doing the Lord's work."[150] This commentary on the child preacher along with the B.P. initials on the bill the narrator reads gain context when Invisible Man later comes across one of Rinehart's lovers who calls him by his first name, Bliss. This name is significant in Ellison's larger body of work given that it is the birth name given to the character who serves as the main protagonist in *Three Days*. Bliss grows up to pass for a white man and changes his name to Sunraider before running for the U.S. Senate on a race baiting agenda. While several critics have interrogated the possibilities of the Invisible Man/Bliss/Sunraider connection, what is at stake in this discussion is how the intra-novel connection parallels the macro/micro shift between Power/Authority as linked to Resistance. The narrator begins to discern the distinction that Rinehart has made between his own identity and reality as it exists and begins to recognize the virtue inherent to the power of Invisibility:

[150] Invisible Man, p. 488

> His world was possibility and he knew it. He was years ahead of me and I was a fool. I must have been crazy and blind. The world in which we lived was without boundaries…perhaps only the unbelievable could be believed. Perhaps the truth was always a lie….I wanted to know Rinehart and yet, I thought, I'm upset because I know I don't have to know him, that simply becoming aware of his existence, being mistaken for him, is enough to convince me that Rinehart is real. It couldn't be, but it is. And it can be, is, simply because it's unknown.[151]

In a realization that reaffirms the critiques of positivism, Invisible Man sheds light on the unknowable nature as knowledge itself. The narrator's own plunge into the abyss made palpable by the darkening filter of his sunglasses elucidates the perspectivist attributes of reality and as such, creates a moment of solidarity between the narrator and Rinehart. This solidarity becomes apparent through the narrator's desire to "know" Rinehart becoming a feeling of "upset" when he realizes he does not have to know him. This lament, however, stems from a recognition that beyond not having to know him, Invisible Man *cannot* know him because such mutual recognition undermines the position of Resistance towards reality that both men seek.

[151] Invisible Man, p. 490

This moment of enlightenment bestows the narrator with a closeness to Power that induces an existential anxiety. Such a mental state becomes clear when he states, "You could actually make yourself anew. The notion was frightening, for now the world seemed to flow before my eyes. All boundaries down, freedom was not only the recognition of necessity, it was the recognition of possibility."[152] By presenting the recognition of possibility and necessity as intrinsic characteristics of freedom, Invisible Man categorizes the act of being free not as a state of mind, but as an active awareness, exposing the cognitive mechanics that ensnare the individual into the will of the collective. In this way, the narrator comes to realize how he has been used as a pawn by the Brotherhood, whose interest in acquiring a political presence on the national stage flatten out the pursuits of the black community in Harlem as irrelevant. Invisible Man articulates this newfound awareness as follows: "Sacrifice and leadership, I thought. For him it was simple. For them it was simple. But hell, I was both. Both sacrificer and victim. I couldn't get away from that."[153] Here, the protagonist recognizes that being both "sacrificer and victim" denies him a legitimate position of Resistance and he cannot come to terms with abandoning his own community interests in favor of a larger political ideology. The duality of this position shifts the narrator between the condition of a black man identifying as an individual and an individual succumbing to the identity

[152] Invisible Man, p. 491
[153] Invisible Man, p. 498

of a collective framework. From this point, Invisible Man continues to form his own conceptualization of identity by privileging the importance of experience from the perspective of the totality:

> I saw that they were more than separate experiences. They were me; they defined me. I was my experiences and my experiences were me, and no blind men, no matter how powerful they became, even if they conquered the world, could take that, or change one single itch, taunt, laugh, cry, scar, ache, rage, or pain of it…now I recognized my invisibility.[154]

This move towards Invisibility inspires the narrator to begin sabotaging the Brotherhood's efforts in Harlem by enrolling fake names into the Brotherhood. Enlisting members who don't actually exist in order to inflate the Brotherhood's enrollment allows Invisible Man to use the premise of Invisibility itself to subvert the position of the Brotherhood in the community. By instilling the illusion that the Brotherhood possesses Power through numbers, Invisibility distorts the perception of the outside community to the Brotherhood's leadership. As such, the systemic gathering and organizing of bodies in order to claim the Authority to speak for them as an affirmation of Power is used against them. In this regard, the riot that breaks out at the end of the novel and sends the narrator into the manhole from where he begins and ends his story, is a

[154] Invisible Man, p. 500

consequence of two ideologies of power erupting into a clash of violence. The violent tension created by this conflict is representative of how the novel posits Resistance as the influence that allows for progress. Violence is destructive and always requires rebuilding at its conclusion, Resistance preserves memory in a way that is constitutive of the desire to move forward.

Chapter 3

The Parallax Paradox: Reconciling Exile and Diaspora in the Final Novels through the In(di)visible

Introduction

The previous chapters have shown how discerning the in(di)visible between conflated or otherwise synonymous concepts—invisibility/anonymity and power/authority—allows us to extricate them from each other thus creating a space for new inquiry. In so doing, I have recast these binaries away from their either/or assumptions in service of a mode of thinking and reading that to recognizes the ideological implications of word choice. By insisting that we acknowledge how social and linguistic structures interact in the shaping of our own perceptions, it is necessary to understand how we may be complicit in systems of oppression when we believe ourselves to be part of its resistance. Therefore, this chapter seeks to deploy the framework of the in(di)visible as developed thus far not as a means of extricating the synonymous for the purposes of interrogation but rather, as a tool for reconciling the antonymous. In order to expose the blind spots imposed by the theorization of the objectified and marginalized, the mechanics of the

in(di)visible explored in this chapter respond to Slavoj Zizek's own reflections on the parallax gap, which he argues is the irreconcilable space that exists between two positions from which a subject can view a given object.[155] For example, Zizek sees the gap that exists between two ideological positions as linked by a "short circuit" in which no neutral position exists. The in(di)visible, however, insists on a position of resistance from which one can shift onto the spectrum of anti-oppression. What Zizek, along with the general domination of white, male, Eurocentric philosophy obscure in their theorizations of the subject/object relationship is not necessarily *what* but *how* the object sees when it looks back at the observing subject. Such a move to the minor position of the observed requires the empathy to see how the objectification of the human denies universality to a sense of subjectivity: just because we have the philosophical capacity to act a certain way does not mean we have access to the performance of that behavior. As such, in order for the in(di)visible to embody itself as an intersectional theory, it cannot simply be a perpetual unpacking of concepts, but also a space of discourse reconciliation.

The first section of this chapter revises how the concept of exodus as reflected on from the perspective of exile and diaspora reads the link between experience and memory as a call and response that forms historical and personal narratives. Analyzing the interactions of Vera and

[155] Slavoj Zizek, *The Parallax View,* MIT Press

Enrique, the two main protagonists of Carpentier's *La Consagración de la Primavera* (1978), shows how their own migrations have formed worldviews unique to each of them. Furthermore, their own conceptualizations of the Americas play a major role in fusing that worldview as part of their identities. Ellison illustrates an analogous concept of memory and experience in *Three Days Before the Shooting…* (2010) through the interactions between Alonzo Hickman and Wellbourne McIntyre. Hickman functions as the embodiment of memory in contrast to McIntyre's insistence that experience is all-important in the quest for truth. While Enrique and Vera's perspectives on memory and experience are not as inflexible as those of Ellison's characters, what both Carpentier and Ellison show is that memory and experience are in(di)visible vis-à-vis any formation of historical perspective and the final novels present a continuous effort to work through the consequences of such a reality. Both Hickman and Enrique hold intellectual reflection as the key component in the formation of historical narrative whereas McIntyre and Vera posit the immediacy of experience as the real anchor of one's own relation to that narrative.

The second section returns to the concept of exodus to understand how it informs our conceptualizations of origin and destination. In *Consagració*n, much of Vera's internal struggle is grounded in a desire to place herself within the world and to come to terms with a historical present that makes such an endeavor increasingly difficult.

Understanding her present as both an origin and destination allows Vera to see how the history she is living is consequential in regards to both the past and the future. Grasping the in(di)visibility of origin/destination becomes paramount to formulating the mobility of space outside of geographical limitations. As an example, my reading of a story told over a meal in Ellison's *Three Days* will show how denying the knowledge of origin allows for a systemic control of the destination as outcome. I conclude this section with an analysis of how Alonzo Hickman and Love New break down the in(di)visibilities of the duality framework as a means of reconciling two realities that stand in perceived opposition. Taken together, these readings will show how the marginalized position holds the potential to reconcile the parallax positions.

Experience, Memory and the Origins of Revolutionary Process

The narrative of *Consagración* shifts between its two protagonists, Vera and Enrique. Vera is a Russian national whose work as a ballerina shifts her life geographically west and Enrique is a wealthy Cuban whose idealism brings him to Spain to fight in the International Brigades. The shifting narratives inllustrate not a back and forth of perspectives, but rather, a coming together towards an initial point of inquiry, which for Vera and Enrique is Spain, where they first meet. The events of the novel range from the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 to the Cuban Revolution in 1959. This is significant because it puts in perspective that the scope of

the novel is not only about two individuals who come of age during revolutions, but also how these two individuals come to terms with the historical age in which they live. While the novel opens and closes with Vera, the first half of the novel develops the viewpoint of Enrique. Because his sections give way to long philosophical musings that Vera breaks to contextualize the events in her own words, Carpentier establishes the idea of Vera and Enrique as counterpoints from the novel's onset. Therefore, by the time the narrative shifts to Vera's own thoughts, the idea of *"la rusa"*[156] that Enrique gives the reader in the earlier part of the novel falls away easily because her importance to the formation of the narrative casts her as an equal to her male counterpart.

Whereas Carpentier's novel switches between the perspective of two protagonists, Ellison's unfinished novel presents distinct points of view when narrating various events through Wellborn McIntyre and Alonzo Hickman. In this way, the protagonists of Carpentier's *Consagración* go through a process of self-actualization that echoes the ways in which Ralph Ellison negotiates the process of identity in terms of experience and memory through the social realities of exiles and diasporas in *Three Days*. While the duality of call and response is still in place, it is instead brought forth as a means to develop the mythology of

[156] The Russian

the novel's main protagonist as opposed to being limited to the characters who are speaking at the time.[157]

For much of their initial relationship, Enrique treats Vera somewhere on the limited spectrum between chivalry and machismo. This is evident from their first interaction in Valencia, Spain where Enrique is injured while fighting for the International Brigades. In a back and forth dialogue, Enrique attempts to place Vera into preconceived political categories to make her legible to his understanding of identity, while Vera tries to place Enrique in terms of nationality. Vera speaks first and Enrique replies, setting off the call and response interplay:

> "*¿Es usted español?"—"Cubano".—"Es decir: español en cierto modo".—"En cierto modo, sí. Pero más que nada, porque estoy de este lado de la barrera". —"¡Ah!"—"¿Y usted?"—"Rusa".—"¿Camarada entonces?"*[158] / "Are you Spanish?—"Cuban"—"So, Spanish in a certain sense."—"In a certain sense, yes. But more than anything because I'm on the other side of the barrier."—"Ah!"—"And you?"—"Russian"—"Comrade, then?"[159]

Both Vera and Enrique make assumptions about the other based on geographical markers. Vera asks Enrique if he is Spanish because they

[157] The call and response structure has deep African roots and is an important part of African diasporic culture. Therefore, structuring the narrative in this way points to a historical Cuban blackness that anchors the identity of the novel even as its characters travel the world.
[158] Alejo Carpentier, *La Consagración de la Primavera*, (Edición de Julio Rodríguez Puértolas, Editorial Castilla, 1998), p. 114
[159] Translation Mine

are in Valencia speaking Spanish. When he responds that he is Cuban, she conflates nationality and language with her "Spanish in a certain sense" comment. Enrique passes for Spaniard both physically and linguistically and does not object to his Cuban nationality being reduced to a Spanish identity. This occurrence is one of the earliest signifiers of Enrique's social status in the novel. Not only is he a Cuban whose physical complexion is light enough to pass for European, but he is also code switching with an accent soft enough to be devoid of geographical distinction. When Vera acknowledges that she is Russian, his reduction of her identity to "comrade" is a political one referencing the Soviet Union. These erroneous conflations of geography and ideology point to the role that revolution plays in casting both the origin and destination of the protagonists and the text's narrative arc. Revolution is what takes both Vera and Enrique from the lands of their birth with Enrique drawn to the armed struggle in Europe and Vera fleeing the reality of its aftermath in the Soviet Union. It is in their opposing reactions to revolution that they are drawn to each other, meeting in Spain, and ironically, once they have built a life together in Havana, their differing reaction towards the Cuban Revolution is what drives them apart.

The conversation between Vera and Enrique continues and turns towards the how they each conceptualize the idea of America. In retaliation to his "Comrade" comment, Vera goes on to respond: "*Yo creía que en la América de ustedes, tierra de emprendedores y de pioneros, no*

se pensaba sino en ganar plata. Y que poco penetraban, allá, ciertas doctrinas políticas".[160] / "I thought that in your America, land of entrepreneurs and pioneers, one only cared about making money. Seldom does one delve, over there, into certain political doctrines."[161] In response to Enrique's assumptions about her political leanings, Vera levies a simplistic critique of capital that would not be out of place in the thinking of one may in fact be a "Comrade." Vera's combative reaction to Enrique is not a dismissal of a particular reality but rather, an undercutting of his intellectual assumptions even at the expense of showing her own ignorance. Enrique is quick to retort:

> *Por suerte hay otra América: la que tú ignoras como buena europea. Porque, después de pasar varios años en Europa, me he convencido de que para la gente de acá, América Latina es algo que escapa a toda una escala de cómodas nociones. Es un mundo que rompe con sus viejos cálculos. Por ello, prefiere ignorarlo.*[162] / Luckily there's another America: one that you ignore playing the good European. Because, after spending many years in Europe, I am convinced that for people here, Latin America is something that is beyond scales of

[160] *La Consagración de la Primavera*, p. 116
[161] Translation Mine
[162] *La Consagración de la Primavera*, pp. 117-118

> comfortable measure. It is world that breaks from your old calculus and therefore, you'd rather ignore it.[163]

Enrique dismisses what he perceives to be a Eurocentric critique as being intellectually lazy and in so doing, interjects a summary of Carpentier's own formulation of "*lo real maravilloso*": Latin American reality transcends the capacity for European conceptualization so that outsiders can only understand it as magic. It is in this intellectual sparring between the two protagonists at the novel's onset that we see the narrative structure of the text take form as a call and response between Vera and Enrique, an exchange that gives way to the story's main theme of how both of them come of age towards the revolutionary mindset by coming to terms with the historical age in which they live. It is in discussing their own origins that the love story of Vera and Enrique begins. This moment has two functions: first, we see Enrique for who he is—a man trapped between assumptions of gender and social class—and second, it provides the reader with an opportunity to reflect on Vera's personal growth within the world of the novel. When we meet Enrique in this moment, his intellectual foundations and political ideologies are already fully formed, meaning that he is who he is for the duration of the novel, any perceived character growth is the product of his commitment to living out of his intellectual exercise as a rejection of his own bourgeois upbringing and privilege. This is first apparent when his initial

[163] Translation Mine

critique of Eurocentricity flips to a self-critical portrayal of Latin American intellectualism:

> *Difícil. Muy difícil, porque acerca de América hemos escrito tantos libros malos que nosotros mismos nos extraviamos en un laberinto de falsas nociones, biografías amañadas, panfletos o apologías, mentiras y tabúes, frases hechas, y hasta rescates y panegíricos de granujas y de cabrones (con perdón). Y nuestros grandes hombres—porque los hubo—están tan recocinados en la salsa de cada quien, de acuerdo con el adobo de cada quien, que a menudo acaban por perder su rostro verdadero… Pero subsiste la palabra América…*[164] / Difficult, real difficult. We've written so many bad books about Latin America that we lose ourselves in a labyrinth of false notions, dreamt up biographies, pamphlets and justifications, lies and taboos, expressions, and even rescues and lofty praise of crooks and bastards (beg your pardon). And our great men—there were a few—are so rehashed by everyone, according to their own tastes, that they easily they lose their real identities… But the word America survives…[165]

There is a sense of critical nostalgia in Enrique's diatribe that falls short of denouncing the Latin American condition. With the understanding

[164] *La Consagración de la Primavera*, p. 119
[165] Translation Mine

that this particular scene functions as a point of origin within the text—it births the relationship between Enrique and Vera that consumes the narrative—we see that although Enrique is voluntarily living abroad and fighting in the International Brigades, he is exiled from the idea of Latin America he presents. Although Latin America survives and persists in both name and idea, it is apparent that Enrique nevertheless longs for the version of Latin America that could have been. Enrique, however, is never melodramatic or remorseful about his nostalgia. In fact, his longing manifests itself in performances of hyper-intellectuality that come off as trite when compared to the raw emotional logic with which Vera approaches her thinking.

In this regard, the path toward revolution is cemented within the novel as a relationship that hinges on an origin versus a destination vis-à-vis the conditions of exile and diaspora. It is not in the similarities or distinctions between these two concepts that one finds an appropriate intellectual grounding for the revolutionary process but rather, in their in(di)visibility from one another. Enrique makes a similar distinction as the one I have made with exile and diaspora when he synthesizes the relationship between language as speech and concept:

> *Porque, así como hay un tiempo-sonido y un tiempo-luz, hay también un tiempo-voz y un tiempo-idea. Cuando digo: La Habana, México, París, no paso del mero señalamiento de un lugar de acción. Pero cuando pienso La Habana, México, París,*

> *tras de la frente se me abre un gigantesco escenario que, en vertiginoso juego de tramoya, ma trae actores, coros, semblantes, gestos, atuendos, ruidos, músicas, olores, sabores, perfumes, colores, edificios, iluminaciones, echándose todo a revivir, a rutilar, a subir o a ensombrecerse, en el instantáneo alboroto de una resurrección…*[166] / Because, in the same way that there is sound-time and light-time, there is also a speech-time and an idea-time. When I say: Havana, Mexico, Paris, I don't go beyond merely signaling a place of action. But when I think Havana, Mexico, Paris, right in front of me a giant stage opens, that with dizzying precision brings forth actors, choirs, expressions, gestures, attire, noises, music, smells, flavors, perfumes, colors, buildings, lighting, all combining into a revival, a spark that rises and casts a shadow upon the instant uproar of a resurrection.[167]

Enrique distinguishes the act of thinking and the speech act through an inversion of what the argument between the value of actions and ideas generally entails. Language, for Enrique, is always a signifier for what already exists in the mind: the idea is already that which words cannot fully capture and which actions, even more distant as the performance of the idea are but a trace of the original thinking-act. Therefore, neither

[166] *La Consagración de la Primavera*, p. 161
[167] Translation Mine

the actions nor the words can exist as clearly as the idea, which in its articulation already imposes an interpretation that by its very nature is limiting. Therein lies the problem of Enrique theorizing the idea as the thing that presupposes word and action: in exposing the limitations of language when distinguished between speech and concept, he ignores the introduction of an alternative limitation, the experiencing of an event. It is Enrique's own bourgeois upbringing and social status that allow the idea of "*Habana, México, París*" to be more significant, in his view, than signifying and attempting to capture the essence of a place through language.

At this point, we begin to see that the novel is not about Enrique's experiences and permutations of revolution, armed struggle, or political identity. Nor, on the other hand, is the novel insisting on portraying Vera's aversion to the things Enrique espouses as an alternative position. In the clash of Enrique's and Vera's worldviews, Carpentier creates a world that seeks to understand representations of collective experience and in particular that of exile and diaspora as compelled by revolution. The novel is about Enrique *and* Vera and how their individual experiences form a sample of lived experience that through their union points to a collective experience. In this regard, Vera's memory of her experience living through the revolutionary process operates as a counterpoint to Enrique's idea of revolution as informed by his own experiences. Therefore, it is their combined story that portrays the

complexity of revolution, rendering their individual accounts overly simplistic, while their collective expression accounts for both experience and memory as necessarily in(di)visible components of the origin of revolutionary process. It is in how their provenance points to an origin of revolution that the role of experience and memory in framing an understanding of exile and diaspora takes hold. When Enrique categorizes the violence associated with revolution in terms of warfare and thought, we see how the inward/outward hinge of self-realization becomes apparent:

> *Y es que lo propio de la guerra está en que quita al individuo toda propensión a pensar* para adentro. *Si se va a pelear voluntariamente—y tal es nuestro caso—se parte de una convicción que nos empuja hacia adelante…se piensa* para afuera.[168] / The thing about war is that, at its core, it strips the individual of the propensity to think *within* oneself. If one joins the fight voluntarily—as is our case—it comes from a conviction that propels us forward…one thinks *outward.*[169]

War, as Enrique understands it, changes an individual's form of self-identification through an inversion of one's thought process. Even when one comes to the reality of armed struggle voluntarily, as Enrique has, there is a change in thinking towards something outside of the self as opposed to the introspection associated with individualism. Here, the

[168] *La Consagración de la Primavera*, p. 245
[169] Translation Mine

revolutionary process recasts thinking as a collective act towards the realization of an idea and in so doing, gives the act of thinking a form of tangible movement. It is in the mobility of this idea that an individual can find themself exiled from the socially normative culture, a place of solitude as Enrique puts it: "*Y ahora me doy cuenta de que acostumbrarse a la soledad* exige un aprendizaje.[170] / And now I realize that becoming accustomed to solitude *demands training*."[171] The learning process assessed with one's becoming accustomed to solitude grounds itself in intellectual growth rooted in a militaristic notion of "training." Even in his thinking, Enrique recognizes the combatant nature of his ideology that leaves him as an outsider among his social caste.

In fact, his home back in Cuba is a place that becomes increasingly foreign to him upon further reflection:

> *Las gentes que vivían en los cuadros de mi tía se me hacían cada día más ajenas; nada tenían que ver conmigo; eran intrusos metidos en mi casa.*[172] / The people who lived in my aunt's paintings became more alien every day; they had nothing to do with me; they were intruders in my own home.[173]

Although Enrique identifies his aunt's house as being her property, he acknowledges that he views it as his home and that he is grappling with

[170] *La Consagración de la Primavera*, p. 315
[171] Translation Mine
[172] *La Consagración de la Primavera*, p. 146
[173] Translation Mine

his newfound realization that he no longer belongs to it. In this regard, the mobility of the idea of Latin America as Enrique unpacks earlier allows for the stationary body to exist in a state of exile, removed from what it considered a home and now identifies as foreign. His rejection of the paintings hanging in his aunt's house is similar to what Vera will do later on as she comes to reject the iconography of the image:

> *Yo en nada tengo fe—ni siquiera los iconos de mirada oscura y patética, puestos en las penumbras de los templos que en el pasado construyeron los de mi raza.*[174] / I have faith in nothing—not even in the icons whose dark and pathetic looks cover the outlined shadows of temples that in the past were built by those of my race.[175]

The rejection of the icon in Vera's case pushes the boundaries of disavowal that Enrique establishes because of its ethnic, racial, and religious terms. The casting of race as heritage in terms of temples built in the past, focuses the idea of *las penumbras*—the light shadowing that exists between light and darkness and makes the exact origin of either indiscernible—as a natural occurrence that joins and separates both in the presence and the absence of perceived distinctions. Enrique will also come to declare a disavowal of the past in racial terms, although it comes much later when he states "*Yo estaba resuelto a mudar de piel y*

[174] *La Consagración de la Primavera*, p. 301
[175] Translation Mine

comenzar una existencia nueva.[176] / I was resolved to change my skin and begin a new existence."[177] The rejection of one's skin points to a transformative moment for both Enrique and Vera whereby what they see when they observe their image is cast away and they appropriate another means of self-identification. It is important to note that here race—*raza*—acquires a nationalistic association as much as one embedded in skin color.

Just as Vera and Enrique in C*onsagracion* bring forth the idea of race to reject the premise of nationality, *Three Days* begins with McIntyre, a white reporter, questioning the state of the nation after the shooting of Senator Sunraider:

> It all seemed possible. And where I had begun to think that we had been the unwitting witnesses to a single outrageous plot, it now seemed quite possible that there were two, separate and unconnected: one to deprive us of an important politician, the other to sever us from our sanity. What on earth had happened to this nation?[178]

McIntyre thinks through the possibility that what he first conceives of as an intertwined plot, might in fact be two distinct occurrences that have Senator Sunraider on the receiving end of a violent act. While the shooting McIntyre witnesses is the former event in the quotation,

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[176] *La Consagración de la Primavera*, p. 706
[177] Translation Mine
[178] Ralph Ellison, *Three Days Before the Shooting…*, p. 22

LeeWillie Minifies' burning of a Cadillac LeeWillie is the event McIntyre associates with the condition of lunacy to which he points. As McIntyre describes shortly thereafter:

> We were stunned by the sacrificial act, and indeed, it was as though we had become the unwilling participants in a primitive ceremony requiring the sacrifice of a beautiful object in appeasement of some terrifying and long-dormant spirit, which the black man in the white suit was summoning from a long, black sleep.[179]

While both events—the shooting and the burning of the car—are directed at Sunraider, they both have a speech-act at their core. First, the shooting occurs while Sunraider is speaking on the floor of the United States Senate. Second, Sunraider inspires Minifiees' burning of the Cadillac when he refers to the vehicle as a "coon cage" while on a radio show. McIntyre approaches these events as challenging the foundation of the nation, establishing how his own experiences present a fundamental disconnect with the historical markers of national memory. McIntyre, focuses on the event not the origin. Ignoring the reality that he is sitting in the Senate of a country birthed through a speech-act turned memory by giving it written form, a *Declaration*. In so doing, he privileges experience as the appropriate narrative force.

[179] Three Days Before the Shooting…, p. 39

In performing the nation that festered in the womb of its declarative speech-act, Severan, Sunraider's shooter and illegitimate son, and LeeWillie Minifiees are both recasting a national identity already grounded in violence. In this regard, when approaching McIntyre as the standard-bearer for experience as truth exemplified by his profession as a reporter, his juxtaposition depicts Hickman as the embodiment of memory. In fact, Hickman's function as narrative memory is evidenced by his being the one who recounts not only the origin of Bliss' birth, but also traces his identity experimentation in transitioning towards Sunraider by reading a summary report from an investigator. As such, Hickman as counterpoint to McIntyre illustrates how two things can be distinct and still be one and the same:

> *Just look at him, Hickman, there he is: Bliss at last. Out of all the time and racked and tiered-up circumstance, out of all the pomp and power-seeking—there's the old Bliss. It makes you wonder all over again just what kind of being Man really is; makes you puzzle over the difference between who he is and what he does. But how do you separate it? Body and soul are all mixed together and yet are something different just the same.*[180]

Thinking in the third person, Hickman's voice rises to a level of omniscience and posits the thought and the act as different gestures that

[180] Three Days Before the Shooting…, p. 412

nevertheless share a source. Understanding things as inextricably linked is fundamental to Hickman's ideology and something that he struggles to make sense of throughout the entirety of the novel. Taking into account the God/Jesus - Father/Son sameness that grounds his religious beliefs, we see that Hickman struggles with his own identity—given that he's a former musician who remade himself as a preacher—suggesting that Sunraider's own battle with self-identifying finds Hickman as a precursor. Indeed, Hickman while functioning as the anchor of memory within the text insists on the biblical connection and recasts Sunraider in religious terms on more than one occasion:

> *For like logic most jokes are two-sided, and we've come to realize that no matter what positions the Senator takes, or how much power he amasses, he remains the creature of our own mixture of blackness and whiteness. Oh, yes! He remains our own fallen angel, our* own *prodigal son. An outrageous notion? Yes! But one for which there can be no earthly undoing. So no matter how hard the struggle has been, we have endured. And as the old saying goes, by simply enduring we've switched the yoke and changed the joke that keeps plaguing America.*[181]

As Hickman's voice ascends while he watches over a hospitalized Sunraider, the situation he and the Senator find themselves in gains an earthly perspective that is grounded in a material reality where he is both

[181] Three Days Before the Shooting…, p. 528

a fallen angel and a prodigal son; the one who fled, made himself found as he rose to public prominence, and whose past returns to him in the present. In this regard, Bliss' exile becomes Sunraider's diaspora because Bliss is who he leaves behind and Sunraider becomes the person who unpacks the baggage he takes with him. This mirrors the structural duality of the narrative that presents McIntyre/Hickman as experience and memory, showing how the relationship between these two concepts is predicated not just on physical movement, but on intellectual mobility.

In contextualizing the triangulated relationship of Bliss/Sunraider, Hickman, and McIntyre, the ways Senator, reverend, and reporter—respectively—deal with their relationship and association with truth is predicated on a notion of authenticity. As McIntyre states, "It is still difficult to distinguish real man from mask, true voice from recording, real leader from actor."[182] Here, the mask, recording, and actor are mere approximations of what he considers to be real and authentic, meaning that for McIntyre—given his preference for grounding narrative in experience—lacks truth in its performance and representation. For Sunraider, in contrast, "Meaning grows with the mind, but the shape and form of the act remains."[183] For Sunraider, there is flexibility in meaning because of the nature of interpretation. As such, any truth that McIntyre might attach to the idea of experience as authenticity fades away when interpretation molds the experience into memory.

[182] Three Days Before the Shooting…, p. 87
[183] Three Days Before the Shooting…, p. 311

Hickman gets involved in a similar conversation with Love New, the Black Native American with whom he speaks in Oklahoma while trying to figure out what Bliss has been up to in the years since he ran away from home as a teenager. During this conversation, Love New proposes the following to Hickman:

> For instance, when you wave your hand at somebody, they'll know right away that it means good-bye. Throw a kiss, or hold out your arms like this, and even a baby will get the message. Yea, but if you say it in *words*, watch out! Because right away you'll resurrect the Tower of Babel and have the grapes of wrath pouring down on your head! Don't laugh, because *most* words tend to be ambiguous, and damn near all spoken words end up as *double-talk*![184]

The text presents a world where the speech-act is always doubled when pressed for meaning through interpretation. From Bliss playing the dozens as a child to Hickman preaching a sermon, the double meaning imposes and often necessitates a double audience indebted to a performance. In the case of playing the dozens for example, the insults the participants hurl at each other are a means of displaying wit and lyrical prowess and actually getting upset at the joke forfeits the game. The audience, however, by virtue of their reactions, holds influence over how the participants interpret the jokes to begin with and in this regard,

[184] Three Days Before the Shooting…, p. 867

the performance is two-faced: one performs for the audience *and* the rival, to entertain and insult.

Preaching a sermon is another instance of "double-talk" as Love New presents it and we both Hickman and Bliss preach at various moments. In contextualizing Love New's statement, a preacher's sermon is a recasting of the Tower of Babel insofar as the oration descends as the word of God on the parishioners in attendance. In serving as God's intermediary, the preacher must justify his role as spiritual leader through performance. In this regard, while he is in alliance with God, he is also in competition with the idea of Him that one might develop, for the Church only survives if the parishioners are spiritual and religious enough to keep coming back to hear the Word. As such, the sermon is analogous to playing the dozens where the performer engages an audience and a rival for the sake of getting both to submit to the power of lyricism. Therefore, when understanding language as origin as Hickman would—meaning that God spoke and the world came into being—we see how language is both an exclusionary and inclusionary gesture whereby its ability to create and give meaning simultaneously establishes the borders of definition that dictate the things that belong and those that do not.

It is through the circuitous nature of language that both *Consagración* and *Three Days* pinpoint the origins of the revolutionary process as an introspection that begins at a point of retrospection. All of

the main characters across both novels overthrow a past version of themselves to begin anew through a reimagining of who they want to be in this new conceptualization of their world. We know this in the case of Bliss/Sunraider in *Three Days* because Hickman pays a college student by the name of Walker Millsap to observe and report back to him the activities of Bliss. The text presents the conclusion of the correspondence between Millsap and Hickman through the Reverend's rereading of Millsap's summary report that is now decades old. It is through Millsap's own interpretations of Bliss/Sunraider's activities that we understand the extent to which he reinvents himself over time. As Millsap comments on Bliss' process for self-identification:

> Apparently the boy was driven by some obscure need to transform himself into any and every image of possibility that entered his Sippy-scrambled mind!…watching him confirmed what I'd been taught during my excursions from the classroom, which was that in a country the most instructive drama is not to be founding the theater—where most of what you get is souped-up soap opera having nothing to do with the life we know—but in the street.[185]

Here, Millsap casts Bliss' persona changes in performative terms that point to both the theater and the street as stages, illuminating the fluidity of Bliss' ability to put on and cast off masks according to the

[185] Three Days Before the Shooting…, p. 700

realities of a particular situation. Furthermore, it is through this initial observation that Millsap foreshadows the transformation that is to come when he states, "I had to ask myself where illusion ended and reality began, and what would happen if he ever stopped acting and decided to limit himself to a single role?"[186] Millsap begins to question his own ability to distinguish between reality and illusion concerning which role Bliss chooses to be playing at that particular time. He is careful to point out, however, that the more worrisome situation is not where the flux of Bliss' personalities confuses our perceptions of truth and performance, but one in which the current reality is considered truth to the extent that we lose sight of the performance altogether. Hence, it is in losing sight of the origin, the memory that births the performance in the current reality, that one loses oneself at the expense of the performer.

Millsap goes on to contextualize his observations by giving Hickman the following conclusion: "I'm forced to recognize that experience is experience long before words can impose the unstable meanings for which they're employed."[187] Again, Millsap points to the multitude of meanings that language might impose on a given reality and threads a connection to Love New's "double-talk" as Hickman himself processes how the sequence of events lead to the Senator's life being in danger as his illegitimate son is trying to murder him. It is precisely because meaning is unstable that Sunraider's son, Severan, acts upon

[186] Three Days Before the Shooting…, p. 705
[187] Three Days Before the Shooting…, p.706

the feelings imposed by the occurrences that fuel his experiences. Much like the experiences that led to Bliss' running away from Hickman and set him on the path for becoming Sunraider, both father and son are unable to come to terms with the memory of their pasts because Hickman denies it to Sunraider and Severan. As the ultimate embodiment of memory, Hickman never reveals the reality of their past and by the point the reader learns the background story through the Reverend's retelling of it, it is already too late because the shooting he is trying to prevent has already occurred. As such, in both Ellison and Carpentier's novels experience and memory converge on a point of origin that is in(di)visible from its destination. That point reimagines the idea of process as revolution given the transformative immediacy of reconciling the antonymous concepts and de-politicizes the idea of "revolution" insofar as moving it away from an abstract theorization and towards individual realities.

The Exodus as Origin and Destination

In both *Consagración* and *Three Days*, the destination of the protagonists in Spain is also the point of narrative origin. This transition from destination to origin is marked in both novels by the crossing of identity and geographical borders: whereas Vera and Enrique move from one country to another, Bliss and Hickman mark their geographical transitions through travel over several state lines in the United States.

The link between how the characters see themselves and the geographical borders they cross points to the fluidity with which the characters move about and across physical space even when the movement is against their own will. As Vera states in the early stages of the novel:

> *En mis viajes fuera del ámbito natal, que hasta ahora fueron éxodos, migraciones de pequeña tribu, fugas ante clamores, himnos y arremetidas, sólo había conocido los cielos que bajan sobre los estanques de glaucos silencios, la infinita repetición del pino y del abedul siempre semejante a sí mismo, nacido del musgo y del humus, vecino del hongo y la aradura…pareciera que nada de lo construido por el hombre pudiera sostenerse.*[188] / In my travels outside of my place of birth, which until now have been exoduses, small-tribe migrations, escapes before clamor, anthems and attacks, I had only known skies that descend over ponds of glaucous silences, the infinite repetition of pine and birch trees similar to each other, born of the moss and soil, neighbor to mushrooms and plowed land…it would seem that nothing man-made could endure.[189]

Vera characterizes her travels in terms of exoduses that come to challenge the perpetuity of mankind. Furthermore, the exoduses also

[188] *La Consagración de la Primavera*, p. 96
[189] Translation Mine

take on militaristic descriptions as means of pointing to how the threat of violence disrupts how Vera envisions the world as she knows it at that point in time. In switching from the presence of violence to descriptors of the physical land, the text blends these two realities as concurrent parts of Vera's world order. In so doing, we see how at the time, Vera remained naive to the ongoing historical conflict in her youth because she had migrated from any given place before the violence actually came. Therefore, placing these early memories in between the migrations and conflicts creates the space for her reflection now as an adult. In the opaque silences and never-ending recurrences of nature, Vera grounds her sense of place and finds a position of retreat from which to serve as witness to the historical changes of her era. In fact, towards the halfway point of the novel, Vera clarifies how she has come to develop a sense of her historical place:

> *Me había tocado vivir en una época de dura Historia—como dura había sido la época de las Guerras de Religión—y no era yo, débil mujer, quien iba a deshacer entuertos ni enderezar lo torcido. Mientras más rodeada de dramas me sentía, mayor era mi voluntad de huir hacia adelante.*[190] / It had been my fate to live in an age of hard History—just like the epoch of the European Wars of Religion—and it was not going to be I,

[190] *La Consagración de la Primavera*, p. 554

> a frail woman, who would right wrongs nor straighten the crooked.[191]

In alluding to the European Wars of Religion, Vera establishes the conflict catalyst of her current historical period in terms that link the political and religious as ideologies. As such, she is able to point out geopolitical complexities that underpin global-scale conflict. In so doing, she begins to understand the limitations of one's individual ability to enact change against the weight of historical force. For Vera, the exodus is her origin as it becomes the way in which she develops an understanding of what she imagines her place in the world to be.

The constancy of migration also imbues itself into Vera's artistic craft as a ballerina, making both her personal and professional identities embody an adaptive mobility. Within the framework of survival and livelihood, her migrations are not only a product of fleeing the threat of violence, but also carry the weight of furthering her training as a dancer. Therefore, the exoduses put in her path the places that allow her to develop her talent and love for ballet, a talent she could only continue cultivating through migrations:

> *Por vez primera vi mi nombre en caracteres de imprenta, revuelto con otros muchos nombres, casi todos impronunciables para un británico. Miré largamente mi apellido, como si acabara de tomar conciencia de mi derecho*

[191] Translation Mine

> *de posesión sobre él. Algo había cambiado en la faz del mundo.*[192] / For the first time I saw my name in print, mixed with many other names, almost all of them unpronouncable for a British citizen. I stared for a long while at my last name, as if I had just become aware of my right to possess it. The face of the word had changed. [193]

In seeing her name on public display through association with her ballet company, Vera begins to identify herself in terms of performance. Immediately upon recognizing her name, however, Vera comes to the realization that the Cyrillic script of her language's alphabet denies British citizens native to the country where she is now living the ability to pronounce it. Vera sees herself and realizes that while others may not perceive her in the same way, it is she who has autonomy over her own name and the "right to possess it." Vera is coming to understand how the changes in the physical space she inhabits also have tangible changes on her mindset. This worldview change shifts Vera's own agency over how she sees herself within the context of the art she practices, allowing the physical and mental connection that Vera experiences to exist in the absence of the speech-act because it does not matter that a British citizen would find her name "unpronounceable." Furthermore, in bestowing the world with a face that is capable of changing, she not only establishes the world as an external object in the abstract with which

[192] *La Consagración de la Primavera*, p. 663
[193] Translation Mine

one can engage, but also separates her own world as being independent of the world that exists on the periphery.

Moreover, it is precisely in the space marked out by the periphery that Vera expends most of her thinking. Her life is one marked by exoduses and this is how she explains her third:

> *Mi madre fue la primera en reconocer, llorando, que no podía poner obstáculos a mi vocación. Embarqué tres días después. Y al ver alejarse las costas de Inglaterra, me di cuenta, de pronto, que para mí empezaba un Tercer Éxodo. Pero acaso habíamos entrado en una época de éxodos—siglo de trastornos y migraciones.*[194] / My mother was the first to recognize, in tears, that she could not place obstacles before my vocation. I boarded the ship three days later. And as the shores of England grew distant, I realized, all of a sudden, that my Third Exodus commenced. Perhaps we had entered an age of exoduses—a century of disruptions and migrations.[195]

We see that although Vera had previously established the boundaries between her world and the greater world in which she exists, she understands that they are not necessarily separable. Her mother, too, realizes that establishing ballet as a profession imposes demands of extensive travel: the aesthetic mobility of the body in performing dance

[194] *La Consagración de la Primavera*, p. 666
[195] Translation Mine

must also accept the inevitable geographical mobility needed for its pursuit as vocation. Thus, this "Third Exodus" is the first the text capitalizes, giving it particular significance. Whereas the previous two lower-cased exoduses functioned as descriptors, here, Vera understands and designates this Exodus with a capital "E" as a formative event of her individual identity.

In this moment, she reflects on the role that the exoduses have played in her life thus far:

> *Desde mi niñez en Bakú, todos mis éxodos—éxodos involuntarios siempre—se debieron a revoluciones. Y ahora, la palabra se me insinúa de nuevo, se me muestra como la expresión verbal de una posibilidad—posibilidad que instintivamente rechazo.*[196] / Since my childhood in Bakú, all of my exoduses—exoduses that were always involuntary—were owed to revolutions. And now, the word advances anew, showing itself to me as the verbal expression of a possibility—a possibility that I instinctually reject.[197]

From her childhood to her present moment, she categorizes each movement as forced, the exoduses as involuntary, even when considered in the wake of pursuing her dream of becoming a professional ballet dancer. The memory of her previous displacements poisons the very thing that she desires and in the very act of looking forward, she is

[196] *La Consagración de la Primavera*, p. 669
[197] Translation Mine

consumed by the specter of revolution, even when it may not apply directly to the event at hand. For Vera, the process of starting anew is revolutionary in and of itself given that the path toward a new destination reorients her own conception of origin. In fact, the very rejection of the political is something that Vera links to her upbringing, "*Nada quiero saber de política, de revueltas, ni de revoluciones. Siempre se me dijo, además, en mi familia, que tales cosas eran despreciables.*[198] / I do not want to know anything about politics, riots, nor revolutions. Besides, it was always said in my family that such things were despicable."[199] Here, the aversion she shows to the combativeness of the political sphere is understood in terms of childhood upbringing and family roots. It is also important to note that the lesson she receives here is not gendered; it is not that women do not talk about or become involved in questions of politics and its occurrences, but that it is something avoided altogether. Furthermore, this explicit rejection underscores the reality that Vera's father made a living as a merchant and therefore, needed to maintain flexibility in terms of political identities to manage his business relationships. In this regard, the social class of Vera's family is predicated on the absence of individual identities and favor a self-actualization that is fulfilled through allegiance to the lifestyle and mindset of the bourgeoisie. The financial security of her family is both what liberates and condemns her to perpetual migration. It is

[198] *La Consagración de la Primavera*, p. 653
[199] Translation Mine

precisely because her merchant class family has access to capital that she can finance her exoduses. Vera's financial security also allows her to pursue her artistic passions which themselves are commoditized within a global market of moveable performances. Both Vera's individualism and her greater connection to the world at large are already predicated on a collective buy-in to a particular social class identity and it is in how she comes to realize this that we find how Vera negotiates the transition from exile to diaspora.

As the novel goes on, the tension among where she is, where she comes from, and how that relates to where she wants to go next continues to drive Vera further toward the west: from Russia, to Azerbaijan, then England, France, and Spain, before finally arriving in Cuba. The different languages of the various places she calls home reflect how she experiences language through her mobility. This becomes more clear when looking at how Vera connects language with the human body as opposed to just the mind: "*Todavía el inagotable cuerpo humano, con su caudal de recursos expresivos, tenía muchos idiomas por inventar.*[200] / Still, the tireless human body, with its wealth in means of expression, had many languages left to invent."[201] Here, the role of the body and its ability for creating language through expression show how Vera—an artist whose trade is dancing—understands the desire to find art at the limits of what an object is capable of. Vera converges language and

[200] *La Consagración de la Primavera*, p. 575
[201] Translation Mine

mobility as an understanding of how language grants the possibility of movement on the edge of a country's border as she transitions into a new one with a language she has yet to learn. In going back to the novel's opening scenes where Vera and Enrique meet for the first time, the importance of a shared language in facilitating access to human interaction is at play, especially when taking into account that their initial conversation is one predicated on the establishment of their origins. The desire for humanity as a presence is evident in Vera's mindset before she sees Enrique for the first time:

> *Crece mi sensación de extravío, de desamparo en esta ciudad desierta, como abandonada, donde no se puede hablar ya de sombras porque todo aquí es sombra—una sola, plena y única sombra…Pero la ausencia de estrellas proclama que, para colmo, hay techo de nubes.*[202] / My sense of loss grows, of helplessness in this deserted city, as if abandoned, where one can't even speak of shadows because everything here is shadow—a singular, full, and only shadow…But the absence of stars proclaims that, to top it all off, there is a ceiling of clouds.[203]

The city personifies the emptiness of the human body and in so doing, draws a parallel between how cities and human bodies negotiate the reality of trauma and memory. The totality of the shadow cast over the

[202] *La Consagración de la Primavera*, p. 107
[203] Translation Mine

city makes discerning any singular form impossible. With its population having fled or hiding, the city loses the very blood that pulses through the veins of its streets that gave life to its institutions of culture, family, and commerce. The city, like the human body, requires life to thrive, not just in the literal sense but also in terms of a social contract. The city where Vera now finds herself is in limbo where the smoke of rubble is indiscernible from the clouds of nature and render the immediacy of survival and safety paramount. Thus, if death is the destination and birth the origin of the same thing we call life, then Vera and Enrique meeting in a city whose very architecture will also bear the trauma of war they both carry points to the crossing of their individual narratives with a historical one. As such, the intersection of the personal with the historical and being cognizant of that moment, as is evident by how both Enrique and Vera reflect on their present, will mark how their various exiles—both involuntary and self-imposed—become part of their own diaspora when they eventually resettle in Cuba.

The theme of an unseen perspective binding two seemingly disparate realities together permeates the novel. Such a position grounds the endeavor of Carpentier's *real maravilloso* and implores the reader to engage with both their own world and that of the novel by looking beneath the surface as a means of solidifying that which is right in front of them. This perspective takes on the most mind-bending of metaphors

when Enrique recounts a strange situation with a pool at a glamorous party hosted by his wealthy aunt in Havana:

> *Pero piscina donde ocurría algo raro, esta noche, ya que los obreros metían varas, termómetros, algo como termostatos, en un agua que se estaba enturbiando—como llenándose de nubes glaucas, espesándose, inmovilándose—de extraña manera. Y, de repente, fue el milagro: se endureció repentinamente la superficie…el agua se hizo vidrio, cristal, hielo.*[204] / But a pool where something strange occurred that evening; as the workers inserted rods, thermometers, and something that looked like a thermostat into water that became opaque—as if it were being filled with glaucous clouds, thickening, ceasing movement—in a strange way. Then, all of a sudden, the miracle happened: the surface hardened all of a sudden…the water turned glass, crystal, ice.[205]

In this scene, the transformation of water to ice occurs in the the tropical climate of the Caribbean, defying the laws of science. In the simplest terms, water turns to ice by using technology to drastically lower the temperature. But it is the artificial manipulation of transforming a liquid into a solid when it should never occur that this supernatural event knocks us into a sense of awe and wonder in the face of objective

[204] *La Consagración de la Primavera*, p. 130
[205] Translation Mine

scientific principles. That water as a substance can take on the multiple forms of liquid, gas, and solid is known and quantifiable. However, the extreme temperatures of cold and heat required for water to take on its forms of ice and steam—in addition to the new names introduced to describe those forms—makes it so that one does not necessarily perceive water as the underlying substance that gives rise to the new form. As such, the pool is only a pool until one makes it an ice skating rink, as happens in the novel when models are brought out to skate, and the position from which one realizes the body of water can be both pool and rink is the in(di)visible. In this regard, the pool metaphor shows that there is a relationship between the idea of the in(di)visible as so far presented in my project and the scientific concept of sublimation whereby a substance transitions from its solid to gas form without the intermediary step of a liquid form. The liquid to ice transition of the water in the pool is a logical transition of form. However, when complicated with its function—swimming versus skating—the pool to ice rink transition lacks the intermediate transition that would allow one to immediately perceive them as both simultaneously. In fact, only engrossing Enrique in the experience of a Kantian sublime moment exposes the in(di)visibility that links the pool and rink as concept existing in the same Caribbean space. Therefore, Carpentier's pool allows for the superimposition of a concept in the abstract over an observable reality

that holds true to the in(di)visibility of memory and experience presented in the novel.

The metaphor of the pool begets the question as to whether the fluidity of identity is a property inherent to water or of liquid in and of itself. It is important to unpack how the multiple identities of a liquid substance that Carpentier engages with in *Consagración* takes on the complexities of globalism and geography in *Three Days…* when a reporter named McGowan broaches the topic of whiskey during a racist rant over lunch. While having a meal with a group of reporters, including McIntyre who narrates the opening section of the novel, McGowan makes a connection between identity, ideology, and the type of liquor one drinks:

> "Nigras who drink such liqueurs have jumped the reservation and are out to ruin the nation…And Scotch whiskey is just as bad. Just as bad…" He shook his head grimly. "A nigra doesn't even have to have heard about Bonny Price Charlie, but let him start drinking Scotch and right away he swears he's George Washington's great-grandson and the rightful head of the United States Government. And not only that, a nigra who switches to Scotch after being brought up on good corn and bourbon is putting on airs, has forgotten his place, and is in implicit rebellion! Besides, have ya'll ever considered what would

> happen to our liquor industry if all the nigras switched to drinking Scotch? A calamity!"[206]

While undoubtedly racist at face value, the insistence on denying black men scotch is predicated on the white supremacist notion of refusing the position of in(di)visibility to the minority. Bourbon whiskey in order to be considered as such must be distilled in the U.S. (despite its popular association with only being distilled in Kentucky), have a mash bill that is more than 51% corn, and be aged in brand new charred oak barrels. Scotch whisky, on the other hand, is simply spelled without the letter "e" and applies to any grain or malt whisky distilled in Scotland. That it is easier for a whisk(e)y to be called a scotch than bourbon simply because of its place of origin is an irony not lost on Ellison given his short story "In a Strange Country," which borrows from his travels to Wales. By unpacking the fluidity of identity though the invocation of a brown liquid in the most literal sense, Ellison points to an American complication of national identity structures and how whiteness puts itself in a position to negotiate who has access to the very notion of Americanness. McGowan's rant, therefore, points to whisk(e)y distillation as an apt metaphor, capturing the role of the in(di)visible in marginalized identities by pointing out how an end product—scotch or bourbon in this instance—are not distinct because of different processes but rather, because of their very origin already presupposing what they will become. The very

[206] Three Days Before the Shooting…, p. 57

process of distillation uses two unreconcilable extremes, hot and cold, in order to achieve a more purified form of the initial liquid. By heating the liquid to catalyze a change into its gas form and then cooling the gas so that condensation brings the substance back into a liquid form, we see how distillation positions us to understand the in(di)visibility of hot and cold not as a transition between temperature extremes but rather, two extremes reconciled in a process of purification. This is precisely why McGowan fears black men substituting the normative bourbon with scotch to such a degree: beyond the matter of palate preference, truly understanding that these two brown liquids are simply variations of a thing called whisk(e)y destabilizes the monopoly whiteness has over determining what is American against the historical and cultural counterpoint of blackness. As such, the position of understanding how a legacy of whiteness might be reconciled with black reality and how both come to bear on a new American identity is too frightening a proposition for the white supremacy personified in McGowan.

In the latter part of the novel, during Hickman's cross-country search for Bliss, the theme of in(di)visibility recurs and is recast in a conversation with Love New from another position: "But the real question is what is this freedom? What are its boundaries?…Because freedom has a twin, and to make life more complex its twin is Siamese…" / "And the name of this indivisible twin?" / "It's Slavery! What the hell else could it

be?…."[207] Love New's contextualizing of freedom and slavery as Siamese twins problematizes the concepts from both a historical and linguistic perspective. Referring to conjoined twins as "Siamese" not only racializes the in(di)visible condition of freedom and slavery that Love New points to, but also points to the names of Chang and Eng Bunker, the Asian American conjoined brothers to whom the term refers. At the age of eighteen, while living in what is today known as Thailand, the Bunker twins were contracted out by their own parents to a merchant who took them on a curiosities world tour. After the contract expired, they eventually settled down in North Carolina where they purchased land and slaves, eventually marrying a pair of sisters and having over twenty children between them. The invocation of Chang and Eng Bunker sheds light on the complicated reality of slave ownership in America that is so often reduced to the image of white skin owning a person with black skin and glosses over the complicity of persons of color in slavery as an institution.[208] Love New, however, goes beyond the mere destabilizing of the historical perspective of freedom and slavery when saying they are "Siamese," he also challenges the language structures that uphold our conceptualizations of freedom and slavery by casting them as a linguistic freeze.[209] Love New's Native American heritage underscores the

[207] Three Days Before the Shooting…, p. 850
[208] Edward P. Jones' "The Known World" provides another fictional representation of this topic and the research of historian Carter G. Woodson provides insight into how prevalent free black ownership of slaves may have been.
[209] Linguistic term applied to binomial pairs that always present in the same order such as salt and pepper, rock and roll, or sick and tired.

comparative youth of the United States as a nation in the global sense of age and time. Furthermore, his positing slavery as the twin of freedom he exposes the ideological gaps that arise from believing that our current freedoms are post-slavery or post-conquest. Such a formulation chains us to the idea that slavery existed before freedom was given, thus granting the historical gaze to the oppressors, a gaze that Sunraider champions and hopes to return to:

> In our beginning our forefathers summoned up the will to break with the past. They questioned the past and condemned it and severed themselves from its entangling tentacles. They plunged into the future accepting its dangers and glories….Time flows past beneath us as we soar….Therefore it is not our way, as some would have it, to reject the past; rather it is to overcome its blighting effects upon our will to organize and conduct a more human future…Our way is to render ideals obsolescent by transforming them into their opposites through achieving and rejecting their promises. Thus do our ideals die and give way to the new….memory is all…Here we move ever toward past-future, by moonlight and by starlight, soaring by dead reckoning along courses mapped by our visionary fathers!….Where we have been is where we shall go.[210]

[210] Three Days Before the Shooting…, pp. 238-239

Here, Sunraider succumbs to the limited vision of a youthful nation built on slavery by preaching that a regression to the past is how progress manifests in their historical present. The threat of Sunraider is that he makes his argument convincing through an understanding of the mechanics of the in(di)visible as thorough as Love New's, albeit from a different position. Whereas Love New understands freedom as *a priori* to enslavement, for Sunraider freedom is conditioned *a posteriori* because slavery exists as a possibility. Therefore, while Love New understands the in(di)visibility of freedom and slavery from the position of the historically oppressed, Sunraider sees it from the position of the oppressor where one must be enslaved to uphold one's freedom. Knowing that his Native American heritage was tyrannized by whiteness and forced into exile within its own country posits the lineage of freedom as historical memory, his Native American culture points to a historical moment of tribal freedom. Furthermore, Love New's blackness when juxtaposed to his Native American half recalls the historical trauma inflicted by the transatlantic slave trade and the fractures of family lineage that occur as a result. This is why Love New functions as a conduit for Hickman's understanding of Bliss' own reasoning and our own interpretations of how he comes to be Sunraider.

For Hickman, the answers exists because they always repeat themselves and the lineage in which one finds this repetition is biblical. When he is waiting in the hospital with McIntyre after Sunraider has

been shot, Hickman responds to the reporter's insistence that "the nation must have answers" as follows:

> They're the same old answers, son: Cain and Abel, the prodigal son and his father, backsliders and blind believers, worshippers of the things of this world and those who thirst and hunger for the things of the spirit. Those who remember and those who forget…You don't mean any harm. No, you're just young; uninitiated.[211]

Hickman presents the "old answers" in the form of dualities whereby there is not a singular right answer but rather, a gap into which we project a narrative that creates the explanation that in his letter to Hickman, Millsap understands as the formation of history:

> Then it occurred to me that under such circumstances "history" didn't exist but as an afterthought imposed later as an explanation. History was a picture of events that were juxtaposed, recorded, and given meaning during the shooting of a given scene. It was not a product of destiny, but of the sound and fury of man-made, man-controlled action that was taking place in a fabricated context of events in which such mortal matters as birth and death, duration,

[211] Three Days Before the Shooting…, pp. 71-72

> change, and chance—those defining limits of human experience—were safely absent.[212]

Here, Millsap points to an intentionality that exists in his formulation of history as an explanation that renders it necessarily unstable so that when one imposes the dualities that Hickman perceives, the explanation actually produces the underlying answer. In other words, whereas Millsap perceives history as a construct, Hickman's own perception takes that notion a step further by understanding the dualities that bracket the framework of the narrative to begin with. For the "uninitiated" McIntyre, any explanation of an event is retroactive and as a result, his understanding of that moment becomes reactionary. What for McIntyre is a shooting that sparks questions and requires answers is for Hickman the consequence of the inevitable. This is because for McIntyre, the story begins at the moment of the shooting whereas for Hickman, it begins at Bliss' birth. The shooting, is McIntyre's origin and Hickman's destination as it is the moment when Hickman is once again reunited with Sunraider and the moment when we realize he is in(di)visible from Bliss. Sunraider does not reject his identity as Bliss outright. This is apparent when he asks for Hickman, acting as memory personified, to join in him in the ambulance on the way to the hospital after the shooting. In fact, it is his blackness as Bliss that allows Sunraider to so readily pass for white. As the embodiment of the origin/destination, Bliss/Sunraider deploys white

[212] Three Days Before the Shooting…, p. 703

supremacy as the agent of his success and ascent to power precisely because it codifies the notion of Americanness that the historical trauma of slavery perpetuates. It is this understanding that allows him to stand in the position of in(di)visibility from which his own self-imposed exile creates a new origin. Nevertheless, this origin converges on the congregational diaspora that Hickman leads to D.C. to warn Sunraider that his son was going to try and kill him. Therefore, we see that the in(di)visible is not just a singular point from which we understand the connection between two synonymous or antonymous possibilities, but also a point from which seeing and understanding other points becomes possible. Sunraider may not see the relationship between freedom and slavery as Love New does, but Hickman's ability to reconcile the perspectives of both men from the position of the in(di)visible leads him on the path to Sunraider, even if it might already be too late.

Conclusion

The Grammar of Creativity: The In(di)visible as Pedagogy in the Era of Alternative Facts

During the writing of this dissertation, we entered the age of Trump in America. The consequences of this new reality have yet to play out from a long-term historical perspective, but there is no denying that something is fundamentally different about how citizens engage with their country and each other. The Millennial generation, of which I am part, has now surpassed the Baby Boomers in size, meaning that for a large number of younger Americans today, collective experience is only now coming to terms with historical memory as a generation comes to see history repeating itself. For Millenials and Generation Z—the generational cohorts that make up the majority of our current student demographics—recalling a moment when we were more divided against each other while also united against the specter of tyranny on the opposite end of our political spectrum is an increasingly impossible task. The slippage of language plays a role in the degradation of our personal and national discourse by codifying fanaticism into ideologies that are serving of power. In branding ideas into ideologies, we strip them of the

vocabulary necessary for genuine debate and critical inquiry across perspectives. Under such conditions, the election of Trump that progressive white America thought to be improbable became inevitable.

What this dissertation accomplishes through its readings of Alejo Carpentier and Ralph Ellison is showing how the position of in(di)visibility allows for a mode of interpretation and critical analysis where two sides are equally at play. This is a precarious position to be sure, one in which we risk succumbing to the logic of the alternative when we acknowledge its in(di)visibility from our original position. When even Bernie Sanders votes in line with Trump's position 12.5% of the time, the state of cognitive dissonance looms.[213] Facilitating the discomfort of ideological dissonance, however, is paramount to the larger application of the in(di)visible as a tool beyond the methods of reading and interpretation that this dissertation outlines. The goal for this theory as the scope widens beyond the dissertation is to understand how it plays out when deployed on fields of critical inquiry beyond the humanities such as the natural and social sciences in service of a more broad interdisciplinary turn in academia. In order for this to happen, however, developing a way to teach and assess discerning the in(di)visible as a skill outside of the histories of literary and critical theory is necessary. In concluding this dissertation, I will explore the pedagogical applications of the in(di)visible that allow students in our classrooms to

[213] According to FiveThirtyEight.com as of this writing.

frame their own perspectives in ways that appreciate and lend themselves to the rigors of critical inquiry.

In the era of alternative facts and fake news, words have never mattered less and they have never mattered more. The right-wing assault on the free press renders their printed word as meaningless opinion to many, while Donald Trump's spoken and tweeted words are either infallible or lies depending on who one asks. Meaning itself is not deferred but rather, has become bound by our own intransigent logic. Thus, the notion that you cannot reason people out of a position they never reasoned themselves into ignores the reality that we reason ourselves into different positions when our logic starts and stops at different points. When our own experience is the primary driver in the formation of our opinions, then like McIntyre in *Three Days,* feelings and emotions cloud one's interpretation of objective reality. This is not to say that feelings have no place in developing personal opinions but rather, that those opinions prevent one from debating from a position of in(di)visibility. Therefore, I am suggesting that instead of dismissing an "alternative fact" outright as invalid, we take its possibility seriously vis-à-vis the in(di)visible in an effort to recast it for what it is, a *feel opinion*. There's an inherent subjectivity to all opinion formation, so the goal here is not to recast the debate of subjective opinions and objective truths in closing this project. Discerning the in(di)visibility of opinions, however, leads to the realization that some opinions are derived from interpreting

objective facts and others from interpreting experiences. This is at the core of the disconnect between Hickman and McIntyre that Ellison depicts in *Three Days*. Hickman understands that collective experiences like racism can be codified into an objective reality from which truth emerges, whereas McIntyre insists that his skills of observation and interpretation are enough to extract truth from singular experiences. A debate across these two types of approaches to truth cannot be reconciled, therefore, fact opinions and feel opinions seal the fate of most conversations before they even begin.

Alternative facts drive the feel opinions that maintain the interests of power because when deployed against fact opinions, consensus is not possible. The role of the in(di)visible in this regard is to understand the position from which the debate has been extricated to its fanatic extreme and connect that to a point from which reconciliation is possible. Take the gun control debate in America, for example: what if instead of discussing what we think "a well regulated militia" means in the second amendment or citing gun death statistics, we framed the debate as an actuary might, around determining the levels of risk tolerance that a person might be comfortable with? For example, I might assume that by living in a city, I am technically at greater risk of being targeted for a crime[214]; however, I can also assume that keeping a gun in my home

[214] This idea generally finds basis in a 1996 paper written by Esward Glaeser and Bruce Sacerdote

puts me at a higher risk of being shot.[215] Both situations involve risk and determining which level of risk is more relevant to an individual can suggest whether or not they might adopt gun ownership. Moreover, noticing that wealthier states tend to vote democratic and that the stock market can generate an incredible amount of wealth in correlation to levels of risk, might point to a reality where risk tolerance can already pre-determine a political position. From this perspective, initiating a debate about risk removes the biases of politics and fosters a more open-minded discussion that can scale down into younger age groups. As such, approaching other political debates from a position of in(di)visibility may allow us to stop preaching to choirs or closed ears in our classrooms and begin empowering our students with an increased capacity for intellectual adaptability as a marketable tool the humanities can develop. This it not to say that we should embrace the increasingly corporate model of education, but rather, that the in(di)visible provides a more humanistic way to engage the reality of our current moment that will not change overnight.

After a decade of teaching across the public school, private school, and university levels, I have seen firsthand how an increasingly plugged-in generation of students struggles to see how inter-connected the world truly is because the immediacy of information and the internet renders process as unimportant. This is not the fault of students or symptomatic

[215] This is the conclusion of Carles C. Branas' team in a 2009 study.

of some generational disengagement but rather, the consequence of a desire for the educational standardization of an increasingly diverse student body that privileges output over outcomes. The critiques of standardized testing in education are prevalent, but its persistence and growth into a billion dollar industry warrants reflection to determine the origin of its intent. In his book *Creative Schools*, Ken Robinson builds on his argument that modern school systems created to educate a workforce for an industrialized age foster conformity and compliance that are outmoded for learning in the 21st century, which Robinson believes must insist on creativity and innovation. Robinson's critique, however, fails to see the ways in which the increasing privatization of American education in particular, recasts conformity and compliance of the student body in terms of assimilation. Tuition-dependent institutions such as, colleges, universities, and private K-12 schools have branded their school cultures for the sake of marketing goals that maintain student enrollments and inflate admissions selectivity. That they make these types of business decisions under the tax-identifying moniker of a non-profit belies the corporate makeup that comprises the trustees who sit on the boards of these institutions. In accelerating the commoditization of education, college counselors now encourage students to select schools based on "fit" whereby a school that does not already reaffirm what student believes about themselves is already a non-starter. In so doing, schools have absolved themselves of the responsibility of not serving those who

are the most marginalized by an intentionally engineered campus culture; if you do not assimilate, then it was never a good fit.

If creativity is a language—a mode of interdisciplinary speech—then we must discern its grammar so that we may teach it and assess it properly using the best pedagogical practices. As the in(di)visible moves beyond the scope of this project, my hope is that it will anchor a methodology of teaching that establishes the grammar of creativity as a means of underscoring a humanities education. The in(di)visible will show how we can conjugate ideas so that we see their possible forms and appropriate applications. By extricating the multiple paths of an idea we can better reconcile the inherent consequences and grant our students a map of critical inquiry that cultivates creativity and instills the adaptability needed for an ever-changing world. The shift towards insisting that STEM education is a better use of time and resources than diving into the humanities is a reaffirming of the mindset that the role of educational institutions is to educate workers and perpetuates the myth that those with degrees in the humanities are unemployable. Academia must reassess how it argues for its inherent self worth by showing that STEM and the humanities are in(di)visible, that technological innovation is a yield seeded and cultivated by the creativity the humanities teach and inspire. Creativity is a language we speak across disciplines especially at their highest levels; for example, Michelin chefs might speak about their dishes the way a literary scholar talks about their favorite

novels, or a carpenter may see in raw wood what a visual artist sees on a blank canvas. The privilege of a formal education should not mean the privileging of certain types of knowledge over others establishing a hierarchy of intelligences. The in(di)visible is my first step towards reconciling our self-imposed differences in service of dismantling the systems that divide us.

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Williams, Lorna V. *The Representation of Slavery in Cuban Fiction*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1994. Web.

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Curriculum Vitae

Education

Ph.D., Spanish, Johns Hopkins University, December 2017
B.A., Latin American Studies and Anthropology, Johns Hopkins University, May 2007

Dissertation (Defended October 2017)

In(di)visible Tensions: Resistance in the Novels of Alejo Carpentier and Ralph Ellison
Director: Eduardo González

Academic Awards and Distinctions

The Owen Scholars Fellowship (2008-2011)

- Prestigious University award for attracting the most promising graduate students.

Gilman Fellowship (2008-2014)

- Includes one year of teaching relief and support for research abroad.

Teaching Experience (Higher Education)

Language Courses:
Intermediate Spanish II (Spring 2014)
Intermediate Spanish I (Fall 2013, Fall 2011, Spring 2010, Fall 2009)
Advanced Spanish I (Fall 2010)
Spanish Elements II (Spring 2009)
Spanish Elements I (Fall 2008)

Literature and Culture Courses:
Modern Latin American Culture (Spring 2011)
The Cuban Short Story (Winter 2011)

Teaching Assistant:
Cuba and the USA: Worlds Apart (Winter 2013)

- Study abroad course in Cuba with stops in Havana, Remedios, Santa Clara, and Cayo Santa María, as well as the United States Interests Section and Cuba's *MinRex*. The course looked at the work of contemporary Cuban artists such as Leonardo Padura, Nancy Morejón, and filmmaker Fernando Pérez to study the cultural and political relationship of the U.S. and Cuba over time.

Hemingway's Cuba (Winter 2012)

- Study abroad course in Cuba with stops in Havana, Cienfuegos, Santa Clara, and Trinidad focused on the literature of Ernest Hemingway and his own historical relationship with the Island. Emphasis placed on the commoditizing of Hemingway as an effort to promote tourism.

Secondary Education:
Language Arts Teacher, Shenandoah Middle School in Miami, FL (2007-2008)

- This public school serves the low-income community of Miami's "Little Havana."

Conference Presentations

"Waiting Out Fidel: Cristina García and the Cuban Condition"
Modern Language Association, Vancouver, BC, (January 2015)

"Stealing Home: Cuban Baseball and Labor Politics in the U.S."
Mid-Atlantic Pop & American Culture Assoc., Baltimore, MD (November 2014)

"Reflecting Rivers: Transparency and Opacity in Alejo Carpentier's *Los Pasos Perdidos*,"
Northeast MLA, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania (April 2014)

"The Built House Crumbles: Poe, Borges, and the Moveable Center,"
American Comparative Literature Association, New York, NY (March 2014)

"Invisibility and Anonymity in the Novels of Alejo Carpentier and Ralph Ellison,"
College English Association, Baltimore, MD (March 2014)

"The Political Shift in the Poetry of Nicolás Guillén," LAGO Graduate Student
Conference, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA (October 2010)

Guest Lectures

"Communication Breakdown: Language Precision in Resistance Literature"
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Administrative Experience and Service

Zelicof Four-Course Dinners Coordinator, Johns Hopkins University (Fall 2012)

- With support from the Vice Dean of Undergraduate Education, this program sponsored a series of month-long mini courses held over weekly dinners with several faculty members from the School of Arts & Sciences.

Meyerhoff Internship in Development, Johns Hopkins University (Spring 2007)

- Served as the liaison between the 2007 Senior Class Gift Committee and the Office of Annual Giving in an effort to develop and implement a fundraising campaign that saw a participation rate above 60% among graduating seniors whose donations totaled over $20,000.

Research and Teaching Interests

Latin American and Caribbean Literature
Twentieth-Century American Literature
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Professional Affiliations

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Languages

- Native Fluency in English and Spanish
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